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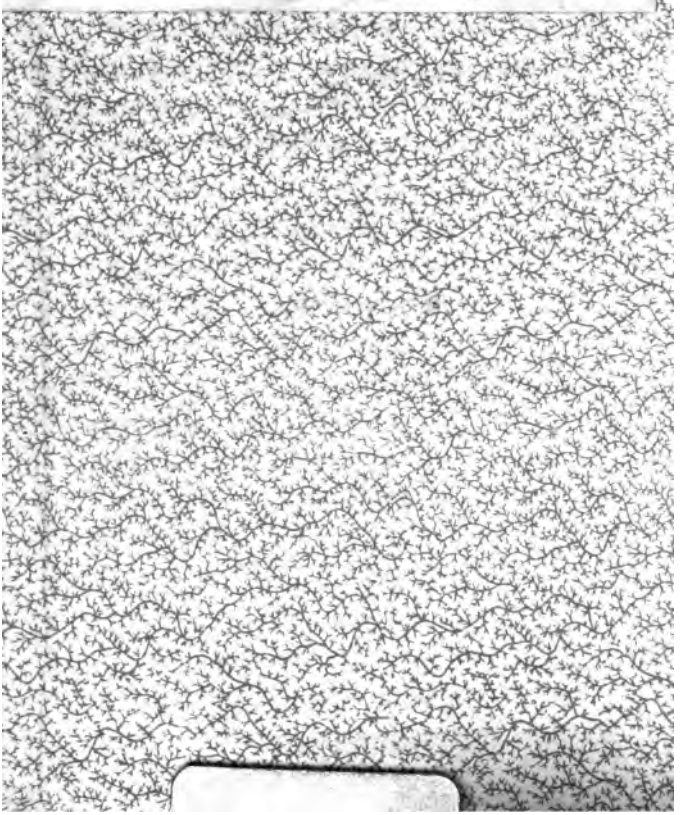

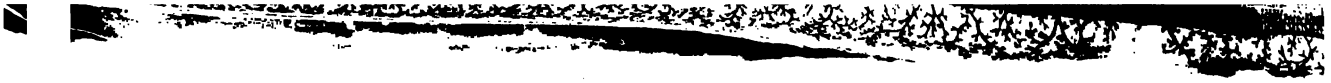

MIRIAM,

AND

JOANNA OF NAPLES,

WITH

OTHER PIECES IN VERSE AND PROSE.

BY

LOUISA J. HALL.

BOSTON:
WM. CROSBY AND H. P. NICHOLS,
111 WASHINGTON STREET.
1850.

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MIRIAM:

A DRAMATIC POEM.

TO

THE REVEREND

ALEXANDER YOUNG,

FORMERLY HER PASTOR, AND ALWAYS HER FRIEND,

THE FOLLOWING PAGES

ARE RESPECTFULLY AND GRATEFULLY

INSCRIBED

BY THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

The author of Miriam deeply regrets having given her early production to the press in 1837, without such revision as her respect for the public demanded. Many errors of carelessness, especially in rhythm, bore testimony to its having been written without a thought of publication; and when at last she yielded to solicitation, and in a temporary access of courage gave up her manuscript to a friend, the state of her eyesight forbade a deliberate examination of its pages. It would have been advisable to have waited a few months; — in that case probably the work would never have emerged from privacy. Her dread of publication would have returned upon her with fresh strength, as she again contemplated some graver faults, which

are so interwoven with the very texture of the poem as to be incurable. The voice of criticism has pronounced upon them no censures so severe as those her own judgment long since whispered. Whilst acknowledging the justice of these strictures, — in all instances kindly expressed, — she has been induced, by the unlooked-for commendations that have greeted her little work, to put forth a second edition; but this she has not done, without first attempting, in the following pages, to repair whatever errors were susceptible of correction.

September 20th, 1838.

PREFACE.

THE following sketch was begun in the summer of 1825, and finished in the summer ensuing. It was commenced in the indulgence of an early propensity for beguiling leisure hours by the pen, and was completed for the entertainment of a small circle of friends. The author has been repeatedly urged to publish it; but as it never formed any part of her plan to attempt a regular tragedy, and as she is fully aware of its deficiencies even as a dramatic poem, she has allowed it to slumber in the safe obscurity of manuscript for a longer period than is prescribed by Horatian authority, though without obeying the other portion of the Roman critic's injunction. It is with great self-distrust that she is at last persuaded to submit it to the fearful ordeal of publication; feeling that, if neglect or severe crit-

icism should decide the time spent in its composition to have been ill employed, she must henceforward conscientiously resign pursuits that have till now lent a charm to many a solitary hour. The lapse of years has already cooled her imagination, and taught her that exertions whose tendency might be more practical and useful would now interest her feelings more deeply. She gives this early effort to the press by the advice of those whose judgment — if unbiased by friendship — she must highly respect. If warned by the result to abstain in future from similar attempts, she will submit with deference to the injunction.

It may not be unnecessary to state, that although the characters in the following scenes are imaginary, the author aimed at an illustration of the state of things which actually existed when Christianity was struggling, almost for life, under the persecution of triumphant Heathenism.

May 1*st*, 1837.

CHARACTERS.

THRASENO, *an aged Syrian, — a Christian.*

MIRIAM, *his daughter.*

EUPHAS, *his son.*

PISO, *a noble Roman, a persecutor of the Christians.*

PAULUS, *his son.*

CHRISTIANS.

SCENE. — *Rome.*

TIME. — *One night, from sunset to sunrise.*

MIRIAM.

SCENE I.

The Garden of THRASENO, *at Rome.* — THRASENO, EUPHAS.

EUPHAS.

My father, markest thou? along the west
The golden footsteps of departed day
Are fading fast; in yonder dusky sky,
Yon far and boundless vault, one lonely star
Is faintly twinkling forth. The perfumed air
Of evening, sighing 'mid the drooping leaves
And closing flowers, breathes fresh. It is the hour.
At early nightfall were we bidden forth.

THRASENO.

Ay! in the dim and silent hour of dusk,
As if to do some deed that conscious day
Might blush to look upon, must we steal forth
To bear the sacred dust of him we loved
To its ignoble rest. In some drear cave,

Some dark and subterraneous abode,
Hid from the common light and air of heaven,
Haunt of the barking wolf or coiling snake,
Our temples and our sepulchres must rise;
And there, beneath the torches' ghastly glare,
Few, sad, and fearful, must the pious meet
To raise in tones subdued the solemn hymn,
Breathe with white, quivering lips the voice of prayer,
And bend the trembling knee unto the One,
The pure and living God! and wildly start
When sighs the breeze along the cavern's roof,
And sways the torch-light's red and fitful blaze.
Is this to worship thee, O God! with thoughts
That mount imperfect and are half weighed down
By dread of earthly dangers? with stern eyes
Glancing around, lest unawares the foe
Burst on our simple rites, and quench in blood
The flame just kindling on thine altars fit,
Meek, holy hearts!

Enter MIRIAM.

EUPHAS.

Sister! thy cheek is pale,
Though all day long a deep and hectic tinge
Hath sat in brightness on one crimsoned spot,
Lending unearthly radiance to thine eyes,
But telling sadly of the waste within.
Fair as thou wast, sweet sister, ne'er till late

The rose hath glowed upon thy pure, pale cheek;
And I have watched the strange and boding flush
Mounting and kindling wildly there at times,
And fading then unto a deathly white,
Until I feel too well that not as yet
Is it the bloom of health or happiness.
And thy dark eyes that flash unwonted fires!
The glow, — the flash, — my sister, speak too plain
A fevered blood, or bosom ill at ease.

MIRIAM.

Has thy young eye, my brother, learnt so well
To read the soul's deep workings in the face?
And have thy sixteen summers taught thee thus
To trace the secrets of a heart as pure,
Though not perchance as open and as blest,
As thine?

THRASENO.

My child! how *can* there be a grief
In that young heart of thine, a secret woe,
Thy father and thy brother may not share?
Around thee I have marked the shadow fall,
And hourly gazed upon thy wasting form,
Until my heart grew sick, yet did not dream
That other clouds than those which overhang
Thine injured sect were brooding on thy soul,
Once the pure mirror of a father's smiles.
Can it be so? It is as if a cloud

From the deep bosom of a peaceful lake
Should rise, and sullen hang upon its face,
Hiding it from the bright and smiling skies.
O, say, my child, there is no secret grief,
No canker sorrow eating at the core
Of my sweet bud.

MIRIAM.

My father! I am ill.
A weight is on my spirits, and I feel
The fountain of existence drying up,
Shrinking I know not where, like waters lost
Amid the desert sands. Nay, grow not pale!
I *have* felt thus, and thought each secret spring
Of life was failing fast within me. *Then*
In saddest willingness I could have died.
There have been hours I would have quitted you,
And all that life hath dear and beautiful,
Without one wish to linger in its smiles:
My summons would have called a weary soul
Out of a heavy bondage. But this day
A better hope hath dawned upon my mind.
A high and pure resolve is nourished there,
And even now it sheds upon my breast
That holy peace it hath not known so long.
This night, — ay, in a few brief hours, perchance, —
It will know calm once more — (or break at once!)

[*Aside*

THRASENO.

And is this all, my child! *all* thou wilt trust
To loving hearts, wherein thou art enshrined
The best, most precious of all earthly things,
And second held to nothing, — save our faith?
And must we look on thee as on a book
Close sealed, yet full of hidden mysteries
That may affect our dearest happiness?
Miriam! it is not well. Dark mystery
Doth hang round nothing pure, — save God alone!

MIRIAM.

O, no! it is not well. A voice within
Full oft hath whispered me, "It is not well."
And yet ——

THRASENO.

"And yet"! — I dare not question thee.
A nameless fear is pressing on my soul.

EUPHAS.

Speak, Miriam! Seest thou not the gathering shade
Upon our father's brow? — O, speak! although
Each word in scorching flame should grave itself
Upon the hearts that love thee with full trust.

MIRIAM.

Euphas! what deemest thou I have to tell?
A wild and terrible suspicion sits
Within thy troubled eye. And can it be
That hearts so young and pure can dream of things

So horrible? My father! yon bright stars
Are o'er us with their quiet light; the dews
Are falling softly from the cloudless sky;
The cool and fragrant breath of evening waves
Our rustling vine-leaves; — yet not one of these
Is purer than the bosom of thy child. O father!
Brother! — ye do believe me?

EUPHAS.

Do I not?
I could not live, and doubt thy truth.

THRASENO.

I know,
I know, my child, that thou art innocent
As native purity and steady faith
Can make the heart of frail and erring man.
But why should darkness hang around the steps
Of one that loves the light? Why wilt thou not
Let in the beams of day upon thy soul,
To mingle with the kindred brightness there?

MIRIAM.

Urge me not now. I cannot, — cannot *yet*.
Have I not told you that a starlike gleam
Was rising on my darkened mind? When Hope
Shall sit upon the tossing waves of thought,
As broods the halcyon on the troubled deep,
Then, if my spirit be not blighted, wrecked,
Crushed, by the storm, I will unfold my griefs.

But until then, — and long it will not be ! —
Yet in that brief, brief time my soul must bear
A fiercer, deadlier struggle still ! — Ye dear ones !
Look not upon me thus, but in your thoughts,
When ye go forth unto your evening prayers,
O, bear me up to Heaven with all my grief.
Pray that my holy courage may not fail.
Mark ye my words ?

THRASENO.

Miriam, come with us !
I have beheld thee sick, and sorrowful,
But never thus.

MIRIAM.

Father ! I cannot go.

EUPHAS.

Know'st thou last night the long-tried Stephen went
Unto his peaceful rest ? and we this eve
Are bidden to the humble burial,
Shrouded in night, of him whose virtues claimed
At least such tribute from a Christian heart.
Sweet sister ! come thou forth with us. I know
Thou wouldst not slight the poor remains of him
Whose spotless life thou didst revere and love.

MIRIAM.

A ripe and goodly sheaf hath gently fallen.
Let peace be in the good man's obsequies ;
I will not carry there a troubled soul.

THRASENO.

Where wouldst thou seek for peace or quietness,
If not beside the altar of thy God?

MIRIAM.

Within these mighty walls of sceptred Rome
A thousand temples rise unto her gods,
Bearing their lofty domes unto the skies,
Graced with the proudest pomp of earth; their shrines
Glittering with gems, their stately colonnades,
Their dreams of genius wrought into bright forms,
Instinct with grace and godlike majesty,
Their ever-smoking altars, white-robed priests,
And all the pride of gorgeous sacrifice.
And yet these things are naught. Rome's prayers ascend
To greet the unconscious skies, in the blue void
Lost, like the floating breath of frankincense,
And find no hearing or acceptance there.
And yet there *is* an Eye that ever marks
Where its own people pay their simple vows,
Though to the rocks, the caves, the wilderness,
Scourged by a stern and ever-watchful foe.
There *is* an Ear that hears the voice of prayer
Rising from lonely spots where Christians meet,
Although it stir not more the sleeping air
Than the soft waterfall, or forest breeze.
Think'st thou, my father, this benignant God
Will close his ear, and turn in wrath away

From the poor sinful creature of his hand,
Who breathes in solitude her humble prayer ?
Think'st thou He will not hear me, should I kneel
Here in the dust beneath his starry sky,
And strive to raise my voiceless thoughts to him,
Making an altar of my broken heart ?

THRASENO.

He will ! it were a sin to doubt it, love.
But yet — must then the funeral hymn arise,
And thy melodious voice be wanting there ?
Wilt thou alone of all our little band ——
Believe me, child, caprice and idle whim
Are born of selfishness, and aptly nursed
In youthful minds, where sin of deeper dye
Would shrink from entering at open gates,
Awed by the light of purity within.

MIRIAM.

That voice is chiding me ! *that* eye is stern !

EUPHAS.

He keenly feels each pang that he inflicts.

MIRIAM.

Dear father ! hear me, then, since I must speak !
This evening hath its task, a task of tears,
And strange and spirit-crushing agony ;
And here, even here, before yon stars have set,
It must be wrought ! Wilt thou not leave me, then ?
Eyes such as thine, my father, must not see

The strugglings of my soul with evil things.
But they *shall* see me, and in triumph too,
When, by the strength that God this night hath given,
I greet thee next in innocence and peace,
And proudly tell thee how the battle went.
Thou mayst not, canst not, aid me ; but alone —
(Nay, not *alone*, O God !) — my spirit *must*
Be disciplined, and wrung, and exercised,
Until I am, my father, what I was, —
A child that had no secrets for thy ear.
Wilt thou not go without me, this *one* night ?
I tell thee on this boon my peace depends :
Peace ! nay, far more ! more than all earthly peace !
Wild as I seem, my sire, trust me this once,
And when the dawn next gilds yon lofty shrine,
Girt with its triple row of statues fair,
It shall not greet one marble brow or cheek
More tranquil or more pure than will be mine !

THRASENO.

Then on this promise, love, will I go forth.
Thy bud of life hath blown beneath mine eye ;
I cannot look on thee, and dream that guile
Or guilt is on that lip, or in that heart.
But with a saddened soul, and with a tear
I cannot check, my child, I thus impress
My parting kiss upon thy brow. Farewell !
God reads thy mystery, — though I may not:
May *He* be with thee in thy solitude ! [*Exit.*

MIRIAM.

Best, best of fathers! fare thee well! — thy thoughts,
Thy prayers, I know are with me still, and may
Bestead me in the trial which draws nigh.
My brother! must I turn to *thee* with tears
To claim the one poor boon of solitude?
Look! the bright west is fading; in the east
The rising moon uprears her blood-red disk,
As if a distant city were in flames
Upon yon dun horizon's utmost verge.
Why lingerest thou? Why lookest thou on me
With such a fixed, sad, monitory gaze?

EUPHAS.

Sister! I too go forth, but with a weight
Pressing upon my heart. Would I knew more, —
Or less! These strange and sad presentiments
Are not the coinage of a sickly mind,
An idle fancy, prone to dream of ill.
Things that these eyes have seen have left behind
Their deep, enduring shadows on my soul.
I could not quit thee now, were there not yet
Within my heart an ever-springing hope,
A confidence that hath grown slowly up,
Even from my birth around my heart-strings twined,
Which whispers still of peace and purity,
And lets me think of naught but holiness
Whene'er I gaze on thee. Slowly, alas!

Doubt and suspicion rise in brothers' hearts.
Thou weepest, Miriam! wilt thou, then, relent,
And let me bide with thee this dreadful eve?
If its dire task be good ——

MIRIAM.

Euphas! away!
And quickly too! — (Great God! my Paulus comes, —
And should they meet!) — O, I conjure thee, boy!
Ay, in the dust, and on my knees, implore
That thou wilt leave me instantly! — Go *now*,
If there is aught in thy poor sister's voice, —
Her supplication, — that may win one boon!

EUPHAS.

Sister, I go! — I would have warned thee more,
Thou wilful one! — but God be with thee now! —
Temptations that are sought —— Nay, look not thus!
But, O, be not too bold in innocence!
A young, confiding heart at once locked up, —
A self-reliance that rejects such aid
As from a loving brother's hand —— Nay, then!
I cannot answer tears! — Shouldst thou repent ——
Farewell! [*Exit.*

MIRIAM.

Repent! not till my bleeding heart
Forget the faith for which it yields its all! —
Great God! the hour is come, and how unfit
Is in her native weakness thy poor worm

To meet its agony! I feel the peace,
The holy resolution I had nursed,
Dying away within me, and my prayers,
I fear, — I fear, — have not been heard! — Now, Father!
God of yon sparkling heaven! leave me not now
Unto the sole support of human strength! —
Was it my fancy? — was it but the breeze,
That sudden showered the rose-leaves in its sport?
O, no! — he comes, — and life seems failing me!

Enter PAULUS.

PAULUS.

Chide me not, love, although the moon hath risen,
And melts her way along those fleecy clouds,
Climbing midway unto her zenith point.
My father gives this night a stately feast,
Graced with the presence of Rome's proudest lords;
And there, within the long and lofty hall,
O'ercanopied with silver tissue, lit
By myriads of golden lamps, that, fed,
With scented oils, pour light and fragrance round,
Listless I lay, engarlanded with flowers, —
And roving, in my rapt and secret thoughts,
Hither, where thou in perfect loveliness
Sat'st like a Dryad, 'neath the open sky,
Waiting thy truant lover: till at last,
Weary and sick of all that met my gaze,
Heedless of guests or frowning sire, I rose,

And, swifter than the young and untamed steed
Flies with the wind across his own free plains,
I sped to her from whom alone I learned
All that my spirit ever knew of love.
And what that love is, Miriam, thou canst tell,
Since for thy sake I lay my laurels down
To wreathe the myrtle round these unworn brows,
Careless of warlike fame and earth's renown. —
But how! thy cheeks — thy very lips — are pale!
By moonlight paler than yon marble nymph
Reclining graceful o'er her streaming urn.
Turn hither, love, and let thy Paulus read
If grief or anger sit upon thy brow.
Thy silence, thine averted glances, strike
With dread unspeakable my inmost soul.
No word of welcome? — Gods! what meaneth this?
Never, except in dreams, have I beheld
Such deep and dreadful meaning in thine eye,
Such agony upon thy quivering lip!
Speak, Miriam! breathe one blessed word of life;
For in the middle watch of yester-night
Even thus I saw a dim and shadowy ghost
Standing beneath the moon's uncertain light,
So mute, — so motionless, — so changed, — and yet
So like to thee!

MIRIAM.

My Paulus!

PAULUS.

'T is thy voice!
Praised be the gods! it never seemed so sweet.
Say on! my spirit hangs upon thy words.
What blight hath stricken thee since last we met?

MIRIAM.

A blight that is contagious, and will fall
Perchance upon thy fairest, dearest hopes,
With no less deadly violence than now
It hath on mine. Paulus! is there no word
These lips can utter, that may make thee wish
Eternal silence there had stamped her seal?

PAULUS.

I know not, love! thou startlest me! — No, — none!
Unless it be of hatred, change, or death!
And these, — it can be none of these!

MIRIAM.

Why not?

PAULUS.

Ye gods, my Miriam! look not on me thus!
My blood runs cold. "Why not," saidst thou? Because
Thou art too young, too good, too beautiful
To die; and as for change or hatred, love,
Not till I see yon clear and starry skies
Raining down fire and pestilence on man,
Turning the beauteous earth whereon we stand
Into an arid, scathed, and blackening waste, —

L. L. Julausky.

Miriam, — will I believe that thou canst change.

MIRIAM.

O, thou art right! the anguish of my soul,
My spirit's deep and rending agony,
Tell me that, though this heart may surely break,
There is no *change* within it! and through life,
Fondly and wildly, — though most hopelessly, —
With all its strong affections, will it cleave
To him for whom it nearly yielded all
That makes life precious, — peace and self-esteem,
Friends upon earth, and hopes in heaven above!

PAULUS.

Meanest thou — I know not what. My mind grows dark,
Amid a thousand wildering mazes lost.
There is a wild and dreadful mystery
Even in thy words of love I cannot solve.

MIRIAM.

Hear me, — for with the holy faith that erst
Made strong the shuddering patriarch's heart and hand,
When meek below the glittering knife lay stretched
The boy whose smiles were sunshine to his age,
This night I offer up a sacrifice
Of life's best hopes to the One Living God!
Yes, from this night, my Paulus, never more
Mine eyes shall look upon thy form, mine ears
Drink in the tones of thy beloved voice.

PAULUS.

Ye gods! ye cruel gods! let me awake
And find this but a dream!

MIRIAM.

Is it then said?
O God! the words so fraught with bitterness
So soon are uttered, — and thy servant lives! —
Ay, Paulus; even from that hour, when first
My spirit knew that thine was wholly lost,
And to its superstitions wedded fast,
Shrouded in darkness, blind to every beam
Streaming from Zion's hill athwart the night
That broods in horror o'er a heathen world, —
Even from that hour my shuddering soul beheld
A dark and fathomless abyss yawn wide
Between us two, and o'er it gleamed alone
One pale, dim-twinkling star, — the lingering hope
That grace, descending from the throne of light,
Might fall in gentle dews upon that heart,
And melt it into humble piety.
Alas! that hope hath faded! and I see
The fatal gulf of separation still
Between us, love, and stretching on for aye
Beyond the grave in which I feel that soon
This clay, with all its sorrows, shall lie down.
Union for us is none, in yonder sky:
Then how on earth? — so in my inmost soul,

Nurtured with midnight tears, with blighted hopes,
With silent watchings and incessant prayers,
A holy resolution hath taken root,
And in its might at last springs proudly up.
We *part*, my Paulus! not in hate, but love,
Yielding unto a stern necessity.
And I along my sad, short pilgrimage
Will bear the memory of our sinless love,
As mothers wear the image of the babe
That died upon their bosom ere the world
Had stamped its spotless soul with good or ill,
Pictured in infant loveliness and smiles,
Close to the heart's fond core, to be drawn forth
Ever in solitude, and bathed in tears.
But how! with such unmanly grief struck down,
Withered, thou Roman knight!

PAULUS.

My brain is pierced!
Mine eyes with blindness smitten! and mine ear
Rings faintly with the echo of thy words!
Henceforth what man shall ever build his faith
On woman's love, — on woman's constancy? —
Maiden! look up! I would but gaze once more
Upon that open brow and clear, dark eye,
To read what aspect perjury may wear,
What garb of loveliness may falsehood use,
To lure the eye of guileless, manly love! —

Cruel, cold-blooded, fickle that thou art,
Dost thou not quail beneath thy lover's eye?
How! there is light within thy lofty glance,
A flush upon thy cheek, a settled calm
Upon thy lip and brow!

MIRIAM.

Ay, even so.
A light, — a flush, — a calm, — not of this earth!
For in this hour of bitterness and woe,
The grace of God is falling on my soul
Like dews upon the withering grass, which late
Red, scorching flames have seared. Again
The consciousness of faith, of sins forgiven,
Of wrath appeased, of heavy guilt thrown off,
Sheds on my breast its long-forgotten peace,
And, shining steadfast as the noonday sun,
Lights me along the path that duty marks.
Lover too dearly loved, a long farewell!
The bannered field, the glancing spear, the shout
That bears the victor's name unto the skies,
The laurelled brow, be thine ——

PAULUS.

Maid! — now hear *me!*
For by thine own false vows and broken faith,
By thy deceitful lips, and dark, cold heart ——

MIRIAM.

Great God, support me now! — It cannot be

That from my Paulus' lips such bitter words ——

PAULUS.

Such bitter words! Nay, maiden, what were thine?

MIRIAM.

Mine were not spoken, love, in heat or wrath,
But in the uprightness of a heart that knew
Its duty both to God and man, and sought
Peace with its Maker, — ere it broke. But thou ——

PAULUS.

And I? — thou false one! am not I a man?
A Roman too? And is a Roman's heart
A plaything made for girls to toy withal,
And then to keep or idly fling away,
As the light fancy of the moment prompts?
Have I then stooped to win thy fickle love
From my proud pinnacle of rank and fame,
Wasting my youth's best season on a dream,
Forgetful of my name, my sire, my gods,
To be thus trifled with and scorned at last?

MIRIAM.

Canst thou not learn to hate me?

PAULUS.

O ye gods!
With what a look of calm despair ——

MIRIAM.

Ay, Paulus!
Never, in all my deep despondency, —

In all the hours of dark presentiment
In which my fancy often conjured up
This scene of trial,—did my spirit dream
Of bitterness like that which now thy hand
Is pouring in my cup of life. Alas!
Must we then part in anger? Shall this hour,
With harsh upbraidings marred ——

PAULUS.

Syren! in vain ——
Would I *could* learn to hate thee! trampling down
The memory of my fond and foolish love,
As I would crush an adder 'neath my heel!
But no! the poison rankles in my veins; —
It may not be; — each look and tone of thine
Tells me that yet thou art my bosom's queen,
And each vain, frantic struggle only draws
Closer around my heart the woven toils. [*A pause.*
Miriam! my pride is bowed, — my wrath subdued, —
My heart attuned e'en to thy slightest will, —
So that thou yet wilt let me linger on,
Hoping and dreaming that thou hat'st me not,
Suffered to come at times, and sadly gaze
Upon thy loveliness, as if thou wert
A Dian shrined within her awful fane,
Made to be looked upon and idolized,
But in whose presence passion's lightest pulse,
Love's gentlest whisper, were a deadly sin.

Cast me not from thee, love! send me not forth
Blasted and wan into a heartless world,
Amid its cold and glittering pageantry,
To learn what utter loneliness of soul,
What wordless, deep, and sickening misery,
Is in the sense of unrequited love!

MIRIAM.

I cannot, must not hear thee. Even now
A chord is touched within my soul. — Great God!
Where is the strength thou didst vouchsafe of late?
Anger, — reproach, — were better borne than this!

PAULUS.

Why should thy gentler nature thus be crushed?
Is not the voice within thee far more just
Than the harsh dictates of thy gloomy faith?
Thy stern and unrelenting Deity ——

MIRIAM.

Youth! thou remindest me, — thou dost blaspheme
The God of Mercy whom I serve; and now
Courage and strength return at once to nerve
My trembling limbs, my weak and yielding soul.
What wouldst thou have? That I should yet drag on
A life of dark and vile hypocrisy,
Days full of fear and nights of vain remorse,
And love, though sinless, yet not innocent?
For well I know that when thy sunny smiles
Are on me, sternly frowning doth look down

My Maker on our stolen interview!
It is a crime of dye too deep and dark
To be washed out but with a life of tears,
And penitence, and utter abstinence.
I never will behold thy face again!
My soul shall be unlocked and purified,
And there the eyes of those that love me well
Shall find no dark and sinful mystery,
Shunning a tender father's scrutiny,
And weighing down my spirit to the dust. —
Paulus! — again, — farewell! yet, — yet in peace
We part!

PAULUS.

Maiden! by all my perished hopes,
By the o'erwhelming passion of my soul,
By the remembrance of that fatal hour
When first I spake to thee of love, and thought
That thou —— Ay! by the sacred gods, I swear,
I will not yield thee thus! In open day,
Before my father's eyes, — and bearing, too,
Perchance his malediction on my head, —
Before the face of all assembled Rome,
Banned though I be by all her priests and gods, —
Thee, thee will I lead forth, my Christian bride!

MIRIAM.

Ay! say'st thou so, my Paulus? Thou art bold,
And generous. Meet bridal will it be, —

The stake, — the slow, red fire, — perchance the den
Of hungry lions, gnashing with white teeth
In savage glee at sight of thy young bride,
Their destined prey! For well thou know'st that these
Are but the tenderest mercies of thy sire
To the scorned sect, whose lofty faith my soul
Holds fast through torments worse than aught that these
Can offer to the clay wherein it dwells.

PAULUS.

Drive me not mad! — Nay, — nay, — I have not done;
The dark, cold waters of despair rise fast,
But have not yet o'ertopped each resting-place.
We will go forth upon the bounding sea,
We two alone, and chase the god of day
O'er the broad ocean, where each eve he dips
His blazing chariot in the western wave,
And seek some lonely isle of peace and love,
Where lingering summer dwells the livelong year,
Wasting the music of her happy birds,
The unplucked richness of her golden fruits,
The fragrance of her blossoms, o'er the land.
And we will be the first to tread the turf,
And raise our quiet hearth and altars there,
And thou shalt fearless bow before the cross,
Praying unto what unknown God thou wilt,
While I ——

MIRIAM.

No more, my Paulus! it is vain.

Why should we thus unnerve our souls with dreams,
With fancies wilder, idler far than dreams?
Our destiny is fixed! the hour is come!
And wilt thou that a frail and trembling girl
Should meet its anguish with a steadier soul
Than thine, proud soldier? — Ha! what hurried step ——

Enter EUPHAS.

EUPHAS.

Sister! I have escaped, — I scarce know how; —
Their shrieks yet ring within my thrilling ears.
The foe hath burst upon the unfinished rites,
Slaughtering some, and bearing off in bonds ——
Just heaven! — what man is this?

MIRIAM.

O, answer me!
And say our father is unhurt!

EUPHAS.

Hear, Miriam!
I *will* be answered first! What knight is this?
What doth he here? [*A pause.*
O grief! can this be so?
Would I had died among their glittering swords,
Pouring my life-blood from a thousand wounds,
Ere my young eyes had seen this cruel shame!
Hast thou no subterfuge at hand, pale girl?
Well may convulsion wring thy trembling lip!
Were I a Roman boy, — of Roman faith, —

This hand ere now —— But no! — I could not do 't!
Thou art too like the saint that bore us both!
Let me be gone.

MIRIAM.

Stay, stay, rash boy! Alas!
The thickening horrors of this awful night
Have flung, methinks, a spell upon my soul.
I tell thee, Euphas, thou hast far more cause
Proudly to clasp my breaking heart to thine,
And bless me with a loving brother's praise,
Than thus to stand with sad but angry eye,
Hurling thy hasty scorn upon a brow
As sinless as thine own, — breaking the reed
But newly bruised, — pouring coals of fire
Upon my fresh and bleeding wounds! — O, tell me,
What hath befallen my father? Say he lives,
Or let me lay my head upon thy breast,
And die at once!

EUPHAS.

He lives, — the old man lives.
See that *thou* kill him not. Let me pass on.

MIRIAM.

Tell me in mercy first, — where is our sire?
Why art thou here alone?

EUPHAS.

Hast thou no fear
To take that honored name upon thy lips?

I meant with gentlest caution to have told
Tidings so fraught with woe; — 't were uselsss now.
Maiden! he is a prisoner!

MIRIAM.

O just Heaven!

EUPHAS.

They mastered him, — the ruthless slaves, — while I,
Lurking securely 'mid the copsewood near,
With shuddering frame and half-averted eye
Beheld them rudely bind his withered hands,
And mock his struggles impotent, and rend
The decent silver locks upon his brow,
While overhead the fair and quiet moon
Sailed on, and lent her light to deeds so foul!
And then I saw him meekly led away
Amid a throng of shrieking captives, men,
Women, and babes, unto the dungeon drear,
Whence he will never issue but to die
A death of shame and cruel agony!
And yet I stirred not, — for I deemed there grew
A spotless lily in the wilderness,
Whose unprotected sweetness none but I
Might shelter from the blast! I fondly dreamed
Thou wert too pure, too good, too beautiful,
To be thus flung upon the cold, wide world,
Bearing the faith that men do trample on,
Alone and helpless, — orphaned, — brotherless!

And so my kind and aged parent went
Unaided, unconsoled. Shame on these tears!
Could I have dreamed the dove would shelter her
Beneath the vulture's foul and treacherous wing?
Alas, my father! sweeter far this night
Will be thy rest within thy noisome cell,
And more light-hearted wilt thou rise at dawn
To front the bloody Piso ——

MIRIAM.

Ha! dost hear?

PAULUS.

I hear, — and I rejoice.

EUPHAS.

How? ruffian! Here?
Art thou still here? I had forgotten thee!
But by the strength the God of justice gives,
In this death-grapple thou shalt surely die!

PAULUS.

Art thou so hot? Unloose my throat, vain boy!
Beardless, unarmed, and nerveless as thou art,
To risk thyself in desperate struggle thus,
With one whose slightest effort masters thee
As lightly as the bird of Jove bears off
The panting dove! ——
Thou seest I harm him not.
Thou know'st I would not hurt one glossy curl
Upon thy brother's head. ——

(*To* EUPHAS.)

Go! thou art safe.
I could not slay my bitterest enemy,
Were he as young and beautiful as thou,
And much less *thee*, — in such a cause as this.
Take thou thy life.

EUPHAS.

I thank thee not. — Alas!
Thou couldst not proffer a more worthless gift.
Why should I live? I look upon yon girl,
Weeping her bitter grief and self-reproach
In utter hopelessness, and pray thee take
The life which thou hast made so valueless.

PAULUS.

Be still. Why pratest thou of misery
To one on whose devoted head the gods
Have poured the cup of vengeance, long deferred,
With such a fierce and unrelenting wrath,
That glory, riches, fame, and e'en the name
I proudly bore, — the hopes that rose this morn
As if the fire that lit them were from heaven, —
And life itself, — are now no more to me
Than last night's dream? ——
One duty yet remains, —
And when *that* 's done! — Look on these features, boy.
Hast thou not seen me on high festal days,
Decked with the tossing plume and snow-white robe,

And bearing high my proud and knightly brow
Amid the throng of Rome's degenerate lords?
Or did the abject Syrian boy ne'er dare
To lift his looks so high?

EUPHAS.

I scan thy face,
Proud youth! The lightnings leaping from thine eye
Avouch thee of a high and haughty race.
But of the name thou bearest I only know
Thy deeds have steeped it in such infamy,
That the pale statues of thy vaunted sires,
Lining thy hall, will surely one day leap
Forth from their niches in their living scorn,
And crush thee into senseless, shapeless dust.
I seek to know no more.

PAULUS.

Stripling! beware!
The powerful magic hidden in that name
Alone can bid thy father's prison open.
I am the son of Piso.

EUPHAS.

Is it so?
Thou, — the proud Paulus, — lurking here by night,
Prowling with stealthy foot around the cot
Where in her innocence there dwelt a maid
Born and baptized in the Christian faith!
Thou Piso's son? Then by the God we serve,

Thou 'rt taken in the toils. Lo! this way come
Glittering in arms my father's trusty friends,
Whom I had summoned hither but to aid
The orphans with their counsel, — ere I dreamed ——
Alas! ——

MIRIAM.

I hear the tread of heavy feet!
And 'mid the trees I see their dusky forms!
Fly, Paulus, fly!

PAULUS.

Am I so base, think'st thou?

MIRIAM.

They come! with wrath upon their lurid brows.
In mercy, fly! — O God! it is too late!

PAULUS.

Is it thy madness or thy love that speaks?
What is to thee this foolish life of mine?
Thou in thine hour of triumph and cold scorn
Hast crushed the heart wherein it beats, — even yet
Too fondly beats for thee! Wouldst thou that death
Should not be wholly pangless? — Spare thy words;
Thou lov'st me not, — the mockery is ill-timed.

EUPHAS.

Hither, my friends, with speedier steps.

Enter armed CHRISTIANS.

Ye come,
Girt with no needless weapons, to the cot

Of him who called you to a gentler task.
Lo, in the dove's own nest the serpent coiled!
So that ye ask not *why* he hither came,
Do what ye list. It is the haughty son
Of him whose myrmidons this night have snatched
Your own best treasures shrieking from your arms,
Turning your hymns and holy prayers to groans,
Drenching the unburied dust of him ye loved
With martyr's blood, and waking in your hearts
The stern, deep cry for vengeance!

MIRIAM.

O my brother!
How have such words a place on Christian lips?
Hear me, ye upright men! Bare not your swords.
The youth on whom ye bend such dreadful eyes
Is innocent of all, — except the love,
The world-forgetting love, he cherished ——

EUPHAS.

Miriam!
Dumb be the shameless tongue that would proclaim
What in a brother's patient love I sought
To hide from mortal eye!

MIRIAM.

It is too much!
My innocence —— Why do I grow so weak?
Wrongly and harshly dost thou judge of me!
O for one breeze of purer, fresher air,

To sweep away the gathering mist that dims
My failing sight!

EUPHAS.

She faints! Let me not look
Upon her lifeless form, lest it awake
Pity that were a sin!

PAULUS.

How beautiful
Even in her deathlike paleness doth she lie!
Fairest! from that kind swoon awake not yet.
Thy words were love? — one struggle, then, for life.
Meantime, in blest unconsciousness, perchance
Thou 'lt scape a bloody sight. — Ye men of peace!
I wait my doom. Ye, who do boast your faith
A faith of love, and peace, and charity,
Look on the son of Piso, and declare
If, in his helplessness, your unarmed foe
Shall live or die. — Ye pause? — I am prepared.
Though my young heart, that still beats steadily,
Be of a softer temper than my sire's, —
Though the same voice that boldly bids you strike
Ofttimes for hours has sued most earnestly
To my stern father for a Christian's life, —
Hath bid the fire be quenched, the tiger chained,
The scarce-believing captive given back,
Even from the grasp of death, to the wild prayers,
The blessings, and the tears of those he loved, —

Yet do I *claim* no mercy at your hands.
Do with me as you list, remembering this, —
The blood within these veins is innocent
As that which stained the floor of yonder cave! ——
How! — with a sudden frown ye wildly pluck
Your daggers forth? They gleam before an eye
That quivers not. — But thou, — thou who art yet
A mild and gentle-hearted boy, arise!
Lift up thy buried face, and let me look
Once more upon its beauty, — so like hers,
In all its pale and touching loveliness!
Thou stirrest not, — I hear thy stifled sobs!
Bidd'st thou the deed thou dar'st not look upon?

EUPHAS.

Let him not die!

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

He must.

EUPHAS.

O, no! not thus
Religion asks the service of our hands.
The spirit of her mild and bloodless laws
Requires not life for life. Let him go forth.

PAULUS.

Boy! with that word thou hast undrawn the bolts
That close the deep, dark dungeon on thy sire,
And loosed the heavy shackles on his arms.
For every idle drop of Piso's blood

Ye in your wrath and blind revenge had shed,
One pang the more had wrung those aged limbs.
But while I live, a blessed hope yet beams
Upon the dire captivity ye mourn.

EUPHAS.

Thou silver-tongued deceiver! Is it thus
Thou wouldst escape us? Think'st thou that because
My Christian heart relented at the thought
Of one lone, helpless victim's blood poured forth
As water in revengeful sacrifice,
I have become a weak, believing girl,
All fond credulity and hope? — Peace! — peace!
When thy deluding accents sound most sweet,
Most do I dread thy deep hypocrisy.
There is no hope!

PAULUS.

No hope! Ye gods! my Miriam!
To thee and thine how humbly croucheth down
The lion thou hast tamed!

EUPHAS.

Nay, let him go!
Hence, in thy cruel treachery, to thy sire!
Tell him that other Christians worship yet
The one pure God within the walls of Rome.
Bid him plant thick his stakes, to fury lash
His howling monsters from the wilderness;
And, ere the dawn, be sure thy myrmidons

Seize the forsaker of his helpless sire,
And let him end his brief and blighted days,
Withering for hours upon the welcome cross
In pangs — scarce worse than those remembrance brings.
Go, get thee hence! I spare thy wretched life;
But on thy brow I pour the utter scorn,
The deep abhorrence, of my soul!

PAULUS.

Wake, maiden!
Why is thy fearful swoon so long? Alas!
Looking upon thy deathlike loveliness,
I hear strange, scornful words, and heed them not!

EUPHAS.

Mourneth the whirlwind o'er the broken flower?
Gaze not upon the ruin thou hast made.
Go to thy sire, and tell him ——

PAULUS.

Stripling! hear!
That sire hath now no son! I give myself
A pledge and hostage for your father's life;
And if the morrow's sun bring not your friends
Back from their dreary dungeon to your arms,
Let the bright daggers gleaming round me now
Drink the young blood of Piso's only son!
Go thou and tell my father this!

EUPHAS.

Roman!

I take thee at thy word! I go! — Perchance
Thou wouldst but lead me to the lion's den.
But if thy words *be* craft, and thy designs
Pregnant with direst mischief to my life,
It matters not; for I have that at stake
Would lead me on through fire and pestilence,
Famine, and thirst, and keenest agony,
Fearless and struggling still while hope remained!
My father! what hath earth to daunt mine eye,
Seeking to gaze once more upon that brow
I should have died to shield from violence?
No! I have naught below the skies but thee,
And to the wild beast's lair I rush at once
To save thee, or to die! — My sister! — nay!
Let me not look on *her!* — O, who could dream
Falsehood had crept within a shrine so fair?
Let me turn from her, ere the memory
Of what she *was* ——
My father's friends! bear ye
The hostage of our kindred's lives away
Up to the lonely garden, by the wall
Where we have sometimes met, and there await
The answer I shall bring. If when the sun
Wakes with his first red beam the matin birds,
I come not yet, nor from the rising ground
Ye should mark aught approach that tokens good,
Deem that my father's cell hath closed on me, —

That in my youth I am held fit to wear
The martyr's glorious crown, — and that no power,
No earthly power, can save the friends ye love
Out of the spoiler's hand. Ye know the rest. [*Exit.*

PAULUS.

The rest! — blood rudely shed, untimely death,
And an ignoble grave, are in that word.
O for one touch of that high energy,
That eager spirit thrilling through each vein,
That in my days of young renown and pride
Bore me triumphant in the battle's van,
Where brightest flashed the swords, and thickest flew
The barbèd javelins round my glittering shield! ——
Christians! ere we go hence, I would but look
Once more upon her face! I hear a voice
Sighing her dirge among yon rustling leaves,
And calling him whose spirit lived in hers
Away, — away from worldly sin and woe.
And I would learn from that calm, marble brow
The deep and blest repose there is in death!

[*A cloud crosses the moon.*

How! doth the God she worshipped thus forbid
The sinner's eye to gaze on things so pure?
Pass, shadow, pass! — a holier light than thine,
Fair orb, falls on my dark and troubled soul,
While thus I drink in peace and quietness
Gazing upon my Miriam's silent face! ——

Ye gods! methought a sudden quivering ran
O'er her pale lips and eyelids softly closed!
She stirs! — she sighs! — she looks upon me now!
Life, — life and light are waking in her eye!

MIRIAM.

Methought once more in dear Judea's land,
A child, by Siloe's gushing fount, I sat
Close by my angel-mother's knee, and heard
The holy hymns she sweetly sung each night
Unto our God, while ever and anon
The quiet murmur of the brook came in,
Filling each pause with softest melody,
Even as it was wont, years, years ago!
Was it an idle vision of the night, — a trance?
Where am I now? Whose dark, bright eyes are these,
Gazing upon me thus? Euphas! my sire!
Where are ye both? [*Rising suddenly.*] Alas! alas! too well
I do remember all!

PAULUS.

My Miriam! Dost not
Remember me?

MIRIAM.

Peace! peace! — that voice, — it kills!
O for the deep and blest forgetfulness ——
Where is my brother?

PAULUS.

Am I then so hateful?

Wilt thou not hear my voice, although it speak
Of those ——

MIRIAM.

Tell me, ye men of anxious brow,
Where is the dark-haired boy, — the boy I loved
Even from his cradle better than my life?

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

He hath gone forth.

MIRIAM.

Gone forth, said ye? — and whither?
Alone, — unarmed?

PAULUS.

Hear from my lips the tale!
Up to my father's palace hath he gone,
Alone, — unarmed ——

MIRIAM.

Enough, — enough! Just God,
Now doth thy wrath fall heavy on my soul!

PAULUS.

Wilt thou not hear what purpose led him forth?

MIRIAM.

I know it, — and I pray you let me pass!

PAULUS.

How! — whither wouldst thou go?

MIRIAM.

To die! — with him, —
With them! — Are they not *both* to die?

PAULUS.

Nay, — nay!
None whom thou lov'st shall die. I bade him say ——

MIRIAM.

How! was he sent, — *sent*, Paulus! — and by *thee?*
I will not stay! loose me! the air grows thick, —
I cannot breathe! — Alas! betrayed, — betrayed
Even into the tyrant's hand! — so young! —
So good, — so innocent, — O my brother!

PAULUS.

Hear me this once! Weep if thou wilt, but hear!

MIRIAM.

I have no power to move. The God who gave
Hath taken away the sinner's wasted strength.
Say on; but let my brother be thy theme.

PAULUS.

Terror and blank dismay he bears with him
This night into my father's stately halls.
Think'st thou the unknown tyrant whom thou hatest,
He whom thy sire's deep wrongs have bid thee curse,
Will feel no shuddering when he hears the tale
Told by thy brother's lips, — perchance ere now?
Knowing that, by some dark, mysterious chance,
Fierce Christian swords are closing round my breast,
Ready with morn's first beam to drink my blood, —
Think'st thou, to save this young and much-prized life,
He would not give a thousand Christians back

From their barred cells? — nay, from the lifted cross?
Thou know'st him not.

MIRIAM.

Paulus, dost *thou* believe
I shall again behold my father's face?
Or that the noble boy, whom thou hast sent
Up to the house of blood and cruel fraud,
Will ever from that den return unharmed?

PAULUS.

I am my father's only son, and loved
As only sons alone are ever loved. In this
Lieth my hope.

MIRIAM.

Thy hope! O God! — thy hope?
Is it no more? — Thou shouldst have been *assured*,
Ere thou hadst risked a life I hold so dear.
O, why doth trusting woman plant her hopes
In the unknown quicksands of a stranger's faith?
She should love none she hath not known from birth, —
Or look to be deceived, as I have been.
Why dost thou stay me thus? Lo! I am called!
I must be there to close their eyes! — Away!

PAULUS.

Hear me, my Miriam!

MIRIAM.

Nay! 't is past! Away!
That voice was once a spell; — it is all o'er!

Why dost thou call me thine? I have no part
In thee, nor thou in me; — and we love not,
Hate not, and *worship* not alike. How then
Can I be thine? I pray thee, let me go!

PAULUS.

And whither then?

MIRIAM.

I know not! — Where are *they*?

PAULUS.

They will be here ere morn.

MIRIAM.

Thou think'st not so!
Youth! thou hast learned deceit.

PAULUS.

I bear all this!
I mark the frightful paleness of thy cheek,
The wild and wandering glances of thine eye,
And stifle down my utter agony.
O, what a night is this!

MIRIAM.

Am I so pale?
It is thy work, — and, for a gentle youth,
Strange havoc hast thou caused, — much misery!
Say'st thou my looks are wild? It is because
I linger here with thee, when I should fly
E'en to earth's farthest bounds. — I will be gone!
Ay! I am weak, but not in spirit, youth!

And the roused soul hath strength to lift its clay.
I must behold the boy's dark curls once more,
And stroke again my father's silver locks,
And hear their last, last words of pardoning love,
And learn of them, pure martyrs, how to die!
Think'st thou I shall have power to look on them
Even to the last, through all their agonies?
Or will he graciously let *me* die first?

PAULUS.

It is too much!

MIRIAM.

Nay, if I haste, he may!
Why dost thou hold me? I am growing strong,
And thou, methinks, art weak!

(*Bursting from him.*)

Lo! I am free!

PAULUS.

Will ye not stay her? I am powerless;
Her words have stricken from mine arms their force.

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

She hath her task; strength will be given her.

MIRIAM.

Ay, ye say true. I am not wholly left;
And like a morning mist from gleaming lakes,
The cloud is passing from my wildered mind.
Youth! wert *thou* as *they* are, even thus
For thee would I risk all. — If there be hope

Or consolation in those words, take thou
One last, fond blessing with them! — *this*, at least,
Will sure be pardoned me. There is a love
That innocence may feel for sinning friends,
A love made up of holy hopes, and prayers,
And tears! and, Paulus, even *such* angel-love,
Living or dying, will I bear to thee! — Farewell! [*Exit.*

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

Thou too must hence with us!

PAULUS.

Not yet, — not yet!
Let me but watch the fluttering of her robe! —
Alas! its last white gleam is faded, — gone, —
And swallowed up in darkness, like my hopes,
My happiness, — like all things fair or bright,
These eyes have ever loved to look upon!
Lead where ye will. The clods beneath these feet
Have scarce less life or consciousness than he
Whose foot is pressing them, with a dull hope
To share their utter senselessness ere long. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A Hall in the Palace of PISO. — PISO *and* EUPHAS.

PISO.

WHY! thou hast trusted in thy youth and bloom,
As if the eye whose lightnings thou hast braved
Were woman's! Thou hast yet to learn, fair boy,
The mower in his earnest task spares not
The wild-flower in his path. It moves my mirth
That with such hope thou shouldst have sought my face,
Intruding on my midnight privacy,
To pour thine intercession in mine ear.
Tell me, I pray, didst thou in sooth believe
Thy boyish eloquence and raven curls
Might move the settled purpose of my soul?
Or is thy life too bitter in the bud,
That thou hast taken a way so sure and prompt
To nip its blossoming?

EUPHAS.

I know not which.
But if I *had* a hope, and it prove false,
Life were the sternest penalty thy wrath
Could bid my spirit bear.

PISO.

I doubt thee much.
When the young blood runs bounding through the veins,
And a strong thought is on the working soul,
And death goes wandering far and heeds thee not,
'T is easy then to scorn thine absent foe.
But if the monster turn upon thee fierce,
Whispering a sudden summons in thine ear,
Checking thy youthful pulse with icy touch,
Flinging an utter darkness on thy hopes,
Boy! in that shuddering hour, — it draweth nigh! —
I shall behold thy bright cheek blanched with fear,
And hear thee, in thine agony, implore
One day, — one hour of that same precious life
Which now thou hold'st so cheap. How thou wilt rue
And wonder at thine own presumption strange,
And that insane and idle hope, which gave
Thee, in thy youth and folly, to my hand.
Ye gods! it was most strange!

EUPHAS.

To thee most strange,
Who of all earthly things alone dost hold
No sympathy with aught on earth. To thee
There is no power in words that can unfold
The steady faith, and deep, absorbing love,
That brought me here. — I have not yet said all.

PISO.

Not all? Why, that is stranger still. Methought

Thou hadst run through each supplicating phrase
Our language knows; and in good truth, although
The gods themselves are scarce more wont than I
To hear the voice of prayer and agony,
Yet will I own mine ear hath never drunk
Tones and entreaties eloquent as thine.
Thou hast said much, fair lad, and said it well,
And said it all — in vain. — Dost hear?

EUPHAS.

I do.

PISO.

Why! thou art wondrous calm!

EUPHAS.

Thou man of blood!
I have not yet said all!

PISO.

But by the gods,
Thou hast! for I will hear no more this night.
To-morrow, if I 'm in an idle mood,
I 'll hear thee, — on the cross!

EUPHAS.

I read thine eye,
That does not honor me with wrath or scorn,
But marks me with a proud, cold weariness.
Yet will I utter — what shall bid that eye
Flash fire!

PISO.

Poor fool! I marvel I have spent

Even thus much time upon thee. Take him hence!
Where are the daring slaves who marshalled thee?

EUPHAS.

Where is thy son?

PISO.

My son! — my son, saidst thou?

EUPHAS.

Ay! — where is *he*? thine only son? — and Paulus,
I think, the name he *nobly* bears.

PISO.

Gone forth
Upon some reckless revel, haply; I know not.
Seekest thou time, that with such idle quest ——

EUPHAS.

I seek thy vulnerable spot. If now
I fail! — Know'st thou not aught, — whither, — or how ——

PISO.

I tell thee, no! Read me thy riddle, boy!
The night wears on, and busy hours are mine
Ere to my couch ——

EUPHAS.

The couch unvisited
By sleep this night! O, were it not for those
Whose lives hang on this chance, I could relent.
How can I aim so near a father's heart?

PISO.

This tardiness and would-be mystery

Portend a mighty tale. Look it *be* such.
Why! what knitted brow and troubled eye!
Say on, and hence!

EUPHAS.

Enough! — Thou hast a son,
Whose life hangs on a word, — a syllable, —
Breathed from thy lips!

PISO.

Well! excellent! Go on.

EUPHAS.

He is a hostage 'mid an armed band,
A pledge thou canst not sport with, for the lives
We came to beg. Give me my father back,
My father and his friends from yonder cells,
And thou shalt have thy haughty son unscathed
By Christian swords! But if *they* bleed ——

PISO.

Say on;
I would hear all.

EUPHAS.

If to the appointed spot
They come not all, — age, youth, and woman, — all, —
Ere the red sun shall look aslant the hills
With its first beam, he dies!

PISO.

And is this all?

EUPHAS.

Ay. Now have I said much, — and well, — and not,
Perchance, in vain!

PISO.

Lad, were there but one chance
Thou e'er mightst profit by the kind advice,
I would exhort thee, when again thou seek'st
To save thy life by trick and cunning tale,
Make thou thy story *probable!* — Dost hear?

EUPHAS.

How! dost thou doubt?

PISO.

I should as soon believe thee,
If thou assertedst that the ocean waves
Were dashing high around my palace-gates;
Or that the thousand Christians I have slain
Were seeking me along the silent streets,
Moaning and glimmering in their phantom-shrouds,
At this lone hour of midnight. — Thou art pale:
In the extremity of fear hast thou
Devised a tale so wild?

EUPHAS.

I may be pale;
But reperuse my brow, and see if there
Is aught that tokens fear!

PISO.

Boy! there is that

Within thy pensive eye I cannot meet,
I have beheld a face so like to thine.
Else had our parley shorter been. — Away!
I will behold — will hear thy voice no more!

EUPHAS.

Forth to the dungeon must I go?

PISO.

Ay, lad!
The deepest, — darkest!

EUPHAS.

So it be but that
My father shareth, I care not how dark.
Darker will be to-morrow's noon to thee,
Thou childless sire!

PISO.

Can it be true? I feel
A cold and sudden shuddering in my veins.
Tell me once more, — I know 't is mockery, —
Yet would I hear thy tale again, false boy!
My son, thou say'st ——

EUPHAS.

Circled with Christian swords,
Stands waiting thy behest! for those whose friends
This night have fallen within thy fatal grasp
Now hold thine own proud darling fast in bonds,
Where rescue or protecting power of thine
Cannot avail him aught. *Revenge* thou mayst,

But canst not save him, — but by sparing those
Whom thou didst purpose for a cruel death.

PISO.

And where, — in what dark nook ——

EUPHAS.

Nay, tyrant! but
Thou canst not dream that I will answer thee.

PISO.

I will send forth my soldiers, — they shall search;
It may be false, — but they shall overrun
Palace and hut, and search each hiding-place
In all this mighty city, till my son
Be found!

EUPHAS.

When he *is* found, that son will be —
Knowest thou what? Sunrise the hour, — remember!

PISO.

Now by the great god Mars! but thou shalt die
For this, be thy tale false or true. Till now
I never felt these firm knees tremble. — Speak!
How fell my noble Paulus in the gripe
Of yonder ravening wolves?

EUPHAS.

How came he there?
Alas! that question hath a dagger's point.
Man, I would rather die than answer it!

PISO.

But thou *shalt* speak, or I will have thy bones

Wrenched from their sockets. — Stripling! — Silent still?
Bethink thee, thou art young and delicate;
Thy tender limbs have a keen sense of pain!

EUPHAS.

In dark thoughts am I lost, — but not of that!

PISO.

Answer me! rouse thee from thy trance! Thou 'lt find
A stern reality around thee soon.

EUPHAS.

It is a thought to search the very soul!
And yet — so young — she *may* repent. — List, Piso!
It is a short but melancholy tale,
And if my heart break not the while, in brief
Will I declare how fell thy haughty son
Into the power of Christian foes. He sought ——
I have a sister, — she is beautiful, —
Touched by three summers more than I have seen
Into the first young grace of womanhood, —
Lovely, yet thoughtful. — O my God! it comes
Upon my soul too heavily! — Proud Roman!
Art thou not answered?

PISO.

I am. He dies!

EUPHAS.

How!

PISO.

Ye shall all die. In my mighty wrath

I have no words, — no frenzy now ! 'T is deep,
Too deep for outward show ! But he shall die,
The base, degenerate boy !

EUPHAS.

Thou speakest now
In the first burst of fury.

PISO.

That *my* son
Should love a Christian girl ! Foul, foul disgrace !
Fury, saidst thou ? I am calm. Look on me.

EUPHAS.

I see the tiger crouching ere he springs.
I mark the livid cheek, the bloodshot eye,
Hands firmly clenched, and swollen veins. Are *these*
Tokens of inward calm ?

PISO.

Now am I free !
My son hangs not upon my palsied arm,
Checking the half-dealt blow !

EUPHAS.

Dost thou exult ?
O Heaven ! to think such spirits are ! Wilt thou,
Piso, indeed forget ——

PISO.

Strange error thine
To tell this secret, boy ! — I loved my son,
And loved naught else on earth. In him alone

Centred the wild, blind fondness of a heart
All adamant, except for him! And thou, —
Thou, foolish youth, hast made me hate and scorn
Him whom my pride and love —— Knowest thou not
Thou hast but sealed thy fate? His life had been
More precious to me than the air I breathe;
And cheerfully I would have yielded up
A thousand Christian dogs from yonder dens
To save one hair upon his head. But now ——
A Christian maid! — Were there none other? — Gods!
Shame and a shameful death be his, — and thine!

EUPHAS.

It is the will of God. My hopes burnt dim
Even from the first, and are extinguished now.
The thirst of blood hath rudely choked at last
The one affection which thy dark breast knew,
And thou art *man* no more. Let me but die
First of thy victims ——

PISO.

Would that she among them ——
Where is the sorceress? I fain would see
The beauty that hath witched Rome's noblest youth.

EUPHAS.

Hers is a face thou never wilt behold.

PISO.

I will. — On her shall fall my worst revenge;
And I will know what foul and magic arts ——

[MIRIAM *glides in. A pause.*

Beautiful shadow! in this hour of wrath
What dost thou here? In life thou wert too meek,
Too gentle, for a lover stern as I.
And since I saw thee last, my days have been
Deep steeped in sin and blood! What seekest thou?
I have grown old in strife, and hast thou come,
With thy dark eyes and their soul-searching glance,
To look me into peace? — It cannot be.
Go back, fair spirit, to thine own dim realms!
He whose young love thou didst reject on earth
May tremble at this visitation strange,
But never can know peace or virtue more!
Thou wert a Christian, and a Christian dog
Did win thy precious love. — I have good cause
To hate and scorn the whole detested race;
And till I meet that man, whom most of all
My soul abhors, will I go on and slay!
Fade, vanish, shadow bright! — In vain that look!
That sweet, sad look! — My lot is cast in blood!

MIRIAM.

O, say not so!

PISO.

The voice that won me first!
O, what a tide of recollections rush
Upon my drowning soul! — my own wild love, —
Thy scorn, — the long, long days of blood and guilt
That since have left their footprints on my fate! —

The dark, dark nights of fevered agony,
When, 'mid the strife and struggling of my dreams,
The gods sent thee at times to hover round,
Bringing the memory of those peaceful days
When I beheld thee first! — But never yet
Before my waking eyes hast thou appeared
Distinct and visible as now! — Fair spirit!
What wouldst thou have?

MIRIAM.

O man of guilt and woe!
Thine own dark phantasies are busy now,
Lending unearthly seeming to a thing
Of earth, as thou art!

PISO.

How! Art thou not *she*?
I know that face! I never yet beheld
One like to it among earth's loveliest.
Why dost thou wear *that* semblance, if thou art
A thing of mortal mould? — O, better meet
The wailing ghosts of those whose blood doth clog
My midnight dreams, than that half-pitying eye!

MIRIAM.

Thou art a wretched man! and I do feel
Pity even for the suffering guilt hath brought.
But from the quiet grave I have not come,
Nor from the shadowy confines of the world
Where spirits dwell, to haunt thy midnight hour.

The disembodied should be passionless,
And wear not eyes that swim in earth-born tears,
As mine do now ! — Look up, thou conscience-struck !

PISO.

Off! off! She touched me with her damp, cold hand !
But 't was a hand of flesh and blood ! — Away !
Come thou not near me till I study thee.

MIRIAM.

Why are thine eyes so fixed and wild ? thy lips
Convulsed and ghastly white ? Thine own dark sins,
Vexing thy soul, have clad me in a form
Thou dar'st not look upon, — I know not why.
But I must speak to thee. 'Mid thy remorse,
And the unwonted terrors of thy soul,
I must be heard, — for God hath sent me here.

PISO.

Who, — who hath sent thee here ?

MIRIAM.

The Christian's God,
The God thou knowest not. He hath given me strength,
And led me safely through the broad, lone streets,
Even at the midnight hour ! My heart sunk not,
My noiseless foot paced on unfaltering
Through the long colonnades, where stood aloft
Pale gods and goddesses on either hand,
Bending their sightless eyes on me ; by founts,
Waking with ceaseless plash the midnight air ;

Through moonlit squares, where ever and anon
Flashed from some dusky nook the red torchlight,
Flung on my path by passing reveller.
And *He* hath brought me here before thy face;
And it was *He* who smote thee even now
With a strange, nameless fear.

PISO.

Girl! name it not.
I deemed I looked on one whose bright young face
First glanced upon me 'mid the shining leaves
Of a green bower in sunny Palestine,
In my youth's prime! I knew the dust,
The grave's corroding dust, had soiled
That spotless brow long since. A shadow fell
Upon the soul that never yet knew fear.
But it is past. Earth holds not what I dread;
And what the gods did make me am I now.
What seekest thou?

EUPHAS.

Miriam! go thou hence.
Why shouldst thou die?

MIRIAM.

Brother! ——

PISO.

Ha! is this so?
Now, by the gods! — Bar, bar the gates, ye slaves!
If they escape me now —— Why, this is good!

I had not dreamed of hap so glorious.
She that beguiled my son! His sister!

MIRIAM.

Peaçe!
Name not with tongue unhallowed love like ours.

PISO.

Thou art *her* image, — and the mystery
Confounds my purposes. Take other form,
Foul sorceress, and I will baffle thee!

MIRIAM.

I have no other form than this God gave;
And he already hath stretched forth his hand
And touched it for the grave.

PISO.

It is most strange.
Is not the air around her full of spells?
Give me the son thou hast seduced!

MIRIAM.

Hear, Piso!
Thy son hath seen me, — loved me, — and hath won
A heart too prone to worship noble things,
Although of earth, — and he, alas! *was* earth's.
I strove, I prayed, in vain! In all things else
I might have stirred his soul's best purposes.
But for the pure and cheering faith of Christ,
There was no entrance in that iron soul.
And I —— Amid such hopes despair arose,

And laid a withering hand upon my heart.
I feel it yet! — We parted! Ay, this night
We met to meet no more.

EUPHAS.

Sister! my tears ——
They choke my words, — else ——

MIRIAM.

Euphas, thou wert wroth
When there was little cause; — I loved thee more.
Thy very frowns in such a holy cause
Were beautiful. The scorn of virtuous youth,
Looking on fancied sin, is noble.

PISO.

Maid!
Hath then my son withstood thy witchery,
And on this ground ye parted?

MIRIAM.

It is so.
Alas that I rejoice to tell it thee!

PISO.

Nay, well thou mayst, for it hath wrought his pardon.
That he *had* loved thee would have been a sin
Too full of degradation, infamy,
Had not these cold and aged eyes themselves
Beheld thee in thy loveliness! And yet, bold girl!
Think not thy Jewish beauty is the spell
That works on one grown old in deeds of blood.

I have looked calmly on when eyes as bright
Were drowned in tears of bitter agony,
When forms as full of grace — and pride, perchance —
Were writhing in the sharpness of their pain,
And cheeks as fair were mangled ——

EUPHAS.

Tyrant, cease!
Wert thou a fiend, such brutal boasts as these
Were not for ears like hers!

MIRIAM.

I tremble not.
He spake of pardon for his guiltless son,
And that includeth life for those I love.
What need I more?

EUPHAS.

Let us go hence at once.
Bid thou thy myrmidons unbar the gates
That shut our friends from light and air.

PISO.

Not yet,
My haughty boy, for we have much to say,
Ere you two pretty birds go free. Chafe not!
Ye are caged close, and can but flutter here
Till I am satisfied.

MIRIAM.

How! hast thou changed ——

PISO.

Nay, but I must detain ye till I ask ——

MIRIAM.

Detain us if thou wilt. But look!

PISO.

At what?

MIRIAM.

There, through yon western arch! — the moon sinks low.
The mists already tinge her orb with blood.
Methinks I feel the breeze of morn even now.
Know'st thou the hour?

PISO.

I do, — but one thing more
I fain would know; for after this wild night
Let me no more behold you. Why didst thou,
Bold, dark-haired boy, wear in those pleading eyes,
When thou didst name thy boon, an earnest look
That fell familiar on my soul? And thou,
The lofty, calm, and, O, most beautiful!
Why are not only that soul-searching glance,
But even thy features and thy silver voice,
So like to hers I loved long years ago,
Beneath Judea's palms? Whence do ye come?

MIRIAM.

For me, I bear my own dear mother's brow;
Her eye, her form, her very voice, are mine.
So, in his tears, my father oft hath said.

We lived beneath Judea's shady palms,
Until that saintlike mother faded, — drooped, —
And died. Then hither came we o'er the waves,
And till this night have worshipped faithfully
The One, True, Living God, in secret peace.

PISO.

Thou art her child! I could not harm thee now.
O, wonderful! that things so long forgot, —
A love I thought so crushed and trodden down
Even by the iron tread of passions wild, —
Ambition, pride, and worst of all, revenge, —
Revengè that hath shed seas of Christian blood! —
To think this heart was once so waxen soft,
And then congealed so hard, that naught of all
Which hath been since could ever have the power
To wear away the image of that girl, —
That fair, young Christian girl! — 'T was a wild love!
But I was young, a soldier in strange lands,
And she, in very gentleness, said nay
So timidly, I hoped, — until, ye gods!
She loved another! Yet I slew him not!
I fled! — O, had I met him since!

EUPHAS.

Come, sister!
The hours wear on.

PISO.

Ye shall go forth in joy,

And take with you yon prisoners. Send my son —
Him whom *she* did not bear — home to these arms,
And go ye out of Rome with all your train.
I will shed blood no more ; for I have known
What sort of peace deep-glutted vengeance brings.
My son is brave, but of a gentler mind
Than I have been. His eyes shall never more
Be grieved with sight of sinless blood poured forth
From tortured veins. Go forth, ye gentle two !
Children of her who might perhaps have poured
Her own meek spirit o'er my nature stern,
Since the bare image of her buried charms,
Soft gleaming from your youthful brows, hath power
To stir my spirit thus ! But go ye forth !
Ye leave an altered and a milder man
Than him ye sought. Tell Paulus this,
To quicken his young steps.

MIRIAM.

Now may the peace
That follows just and worthy deeds be thine !
And may deep truths be born, 'mid thy remorse,
In the recesses of thy soul, to make
That soul even yet a shrine of holiness.

EUPHAS.

Piso ! how shall we pass yon steel-clad men,
Keeping stern vigil round the dungeon gate ?

PISO.

Take ye my well-known ring, — and here, — the list, —

Ay, this is it, methinks: show these —— Great gods!

EUPHAS.

What is there on yon scroll which shakes him thus?

MIRIAM.

A name, at which he points with stiffening hand,
And eyeballs full of wrath! — Alas! alas!
I guess too well. — My brother, droop thou not.

PISO.

Your *father*, did ye say? Was it *his* life
Ye came to beg?

MIRIAM.

His life; but not alone
The life so dear to us; for he hath friends
Sharing his fetters and his final doom.

PISO.

Little reck I of *them*. Tell me his name! [*A pause.*
Speak, boy! or I will tear thee piecemeal!

MIRIAM.

Stay!
Stern son of violence! the name thou askest
Is — is — Thraseno!

PISO.

Well I knew it, girl!
Now, by the gods, had I not been entranced,
I sooner had conjectured this. — Foul name!
Thus do I tear thee out, — and even thus
Rend with my teeth! — O rage! she wedded him,

And ever since that hated name hath been
The voice of serpents in mine ear! — But now ——
Why go ye not? Here is your list! and all,
Ay, every one whose name is here set down,
Will my good guards forthwith release you!

MIRIAM.

Piso!
In mercy mock us not! children of her
Whom thou didst love ——

PISO.

Ay, maid! but ye are *his*
Whom I do hate! That chord is broken now, —
Its music hushed! Is *she* not in her grave, —
And *he* — within my grasp?

MIRIAM.

Where is thy peace, —
Thy penitence?

PISO.

Fled all, — a moonbeam brief
Upon a stormy sea. That magic name
Hath roused the wild, loud winds again. — Begone!
Save whom ye may.

MIRIAM.

Piso! I go not hence
Until my father's name be on this scroll.

PISO.

Take root, then, where thou art! for by dark Styx
I swear ——

MIRIAM.

Nay, swear thou not, till I am heard.
Hast thou forgot thy son?

PISO.

No! let him die,
So that I have my long-deferred revenge!
Thy lip grows pale! — Art thou not answered now?

MIRIAM.

Deep horror falls upon me! Can it be
Such demon spirits dwell on earth?

PISO.

Bold maiden!
While thou art safe, go hence; for in his might
The tiger wakes within me!

MIRIAM.

Be it so.
He can but rend me where I stand. And here,
Living or dying, will I raise my voice
In a firm hope! The God that brought me here
Is round me in the silent air. On me
Falleth the influence of an unseen Eye!
And in the strength of secret, earnest prayer,
This awful consciousness doth nerve my frame.
Thou man of evil and ungoverned soul,
My father thou *mayst* slay! Flames will not fall
From heaven to scorch and wither thee! The earth
Will gape not underneath thy feet! And peace,

Mock, hollow, *seeming* peace, may shadow still
Thy home and hearth! But deep within thy breast
A fierce, consuming fire shall ever dwell.
Each night shall ope a gulf of horrid dreams
To swallow up thy soul. The livelong day
That soul shall yearn for peace and quietness,
As the hart panteth for the water-brooks,
And know that even in *death* — is no repose!
And this shall be thy life! Then a dark hour
Will surely come ——

PISO.

Maiden, be warned! All this
I know. It moves me not.

MIRIAM.

Nay, one thing more
Thou knowest not. There is on all this earth —
Full as it is of young and gentle hearts —
One man alone that loves a wretch like thee;
And he, thou say'st, must die! All other eyes
Do greet thee with a cold or wrathful look,
Or, in the baseness of their fear, shun thine;
And he whose loving glance alone spake peace
Thou say'st must die in youth! Thou know'st not yet
The deep and bitter sense of loneliness,
The throes and achings of a childless heart,
Which yet will all be thine! Thou know'st not yet
What 't is to wander 'mid thy spacious halls,

And find them desolate! — wildly to start
From thy deep musings at the distant sound
Of voice or step like his, and sink back sick —
Ay, sick at heart — with dark remembrances!
To dream thou seest him as in years gone by,
When, in his bright and joyous infancy,
His laughing eyes amid thick curls sought thine,
And his soft arms were twined around thy neck,
And his twin rosebud lips just lisped thy name, —
Yet feel in agony 't is but a dream!
Thou know'st not yet what 't is to lead the van
Of armies hurrying on to victory,
Yet, in the pomp and glory of that hour,
Sadly to miss the well-known snowy plume,
Whereon thine eyes were ever proudly fixed
In battle-field! — to sit, at midnight deep,
Alone within thy tent, — all shuddering, —
When, as the curtained door lets in the breeze,
Thy fancy conjures up the gleaming arms
And bright young hero-face of him who once
Had been most welcome there! — and worst of all ——

PISO.

It is enough! The gift of prophecy
Is on thee, maid! A power that is not thine
Looks out from that dilated, awful form, —
Those eyes deep-flashing with unearthly light, —
And stills my soul. — My Paulus must not die!
And yet — to give up thus the boon ——

MIRIAM.

What boon?

A boon of blood ? — To him, the good old man,
Death is not terrible, but only seems
A dark, short passage to a land of light,
Where, 'mid high ecstasy, he shall behold
The unshrouded glories of his Maker's face,
And learn all mysteries, and gaze at last
Upon the ascended Prince, and never more
Know grief or pain, or part from those he loves !
Yet will his blood cry loudly from the dust,
And bring deep vengeance on his murderer !

PISO.

My Paulus must not die ! Let me revolve ——
Maiden ! thy words have sunk into my soul ;
Yet would I ponder ere I thus lay down
A purpose cherished in my inmost heart,
That which hath been my dream by night, — by day
My life's sole aim. Have I not deeply sworn,
Long years ere thou wert born, that should the gods
E'er give him to my rage, — and yet I pause ? —
Shall Christian vipers sting mine only son,
And I not crush them into nothingness ?
Am I so pinioned, vain, and powerless ?
Work, busy brain ! thy cunning must not fail. [*Retires.*

EUPHAS.

My sister ! thou art spent.

MIRIAM.

Not yet; although
The strange excitement of my spirit dies,
And stern suspense is fretting fast away
The ties which hold that spirit from its home,
Yet shall I linger till my task be done.
Look! on that moody brow what dost thou read?

EUPHAS.

Alas! no hope. And yet methinks a smile
Of inward exultation sudden gleams
Athwart his features, like a distant flash
Of lurid lightning 'mid thick clouds. My sister!
I like it not.

MIRIAM.

He marks us watching him,
And with a brightening aspect draweth nigh.

PISO.

Children! go hence in peace, for I have held
Communion with my own fierce, warring thoughts,
And there is something there which pleads your cause.
I cannot live on this dark earth alone;
I cannot die, if burdened with *his* blood;
I cannot give my brave and only son
To buy the luxury of my revenge!
So ye have won your boon, and I must stake
My Paulus too on your fidelity!
Ye *might* deceive me; but I read you well,

Two young, high-minded souls ; — to you I trust
All that I hold most dear. In peace and hope
Go hence, and send him home.

MIRIAM.

Go hence ! and how ?
Leaving behind us those for whom we came ?

PISO.

Fear not, for they shall follow thee. This hour,
This instant, will I take myself the way
That leads down to their dwellings dark and drear,
And set them free.

MIRIAM.

And we will cling to thee,
Blessing the hand which breaks a father's chains,
And thou shalt see our meeting, and rejoice
To think that *thou* hast caused such happiness.

PISO.

Nay, maiden ! dost forget ? My Paulus stands
In jeopardy, and ye may be too late !
Seek ye my son, while I release your friends.

EUPHAS.

Piso ! we cannot sound the depths of guile
Within that cold and crafty breast ; — but woe !
If we should trust, and be deceived !

PISO.

How ! do ye wrong me thus ? Can such distrust
Spring up in youthful hearts ?

MIRIAM.

We have good cause
To doubt a Pagan, when he talks of peace
Or mercy for his Christian foes. And yet ——

PISO.

Ye will go forth, — for ye can do naught else.
It is your destiny.

MIRIAM.

We will not dream
There can be perfidy so base. We trust,
And by the confidence of innocence
Will we disarm thy wrath.

EUPHAS.

Nay, sister, more.
He cannot mock us now, for we still hold
Our pledge until his promise be redeemed.

PISO.

Then go. If harm betide my son —— I see
A dull gray light along the east! — Begone!

MIRIAM.

Swear to us first ——

PISO.

What would ye have? I swear,
Both by my gods and by the sacred Styx,
And by the precious blood of that one son,
That I will take your father and his friends
From yonder cells, and send them where ye list,

Before yon stars grow dim! Is it enough?

MIRIAM.

Alone, too, must they come.

PISO.

Ay, girl, alone.

MIRIAM.

And tell them they must seek that lonely spot
Where we all met three nights ago.

PISO.

I will.

Aught more?

MIRIAM.

No, naught. And now, when we behold
The glad procession drawing nigh, with joy
Will we release brave Paulus from our thrall,
And send him back to comfort thine old age.
And he will shield us from all other harm,
While we make haste to quit this bloody land,
Some for a calmer home on earth, and one
For yonder skies!

PISO.

Speed hence! watch o'er my son,
And by the appointed hour even yet your friends
Shall be with you. Remember, ye are bound
To loose him soon as ye descry their train;
And bid him borrow wings to fly and ease
A heart that hath been racked for him this night,

A heart that can be touched through him alone.

EUPHAS.

Let us depart, though fear and doubt still brood
Upon our souls.

MIRIAM.

Euphas! we will not leave
Such words to rankle in a softened heart.
Piso! the child of her whom thou once loved
Leaves thee a blessing for the kindly hope
Thy words have given. Thine be a long old age
Of calm and penitence, — stayed by the arm
Of him whom I shall see but once, — *once* more!
Farewell! I yield —— Euphas! uphold my steps.
This palace shall be his abode, when I
Am silent in my grave! Will he forget
That there was once a Miriam? — Lead forth;
The air will give me strength; and we will thank
Him who hath bid a gladsome light shine in
On hearts that were a chaos of despair.
My father saved!

PISO.

And I *may* be deceived!
Yet I do trust you. — Haste! it is the dawn,
Gleaming through yon arcade, that bids your cheeks
Look pale, and dims my tapers thus. Depart.
If ye should be too late, earth hath no cave
To hide you from my wrath! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

A rising Ground in a deserted Garden, near the City Walls. — PAULUS, *and* CHRISTIANS *keeping guard.*

PAULUS.

I have gazed upward on yon twinkling gems
Until my eyes grew dim; and then have turned
To look upon the starlit face of things,
Obscure, yet beautiful, and watched the moon
Reddening 'mid earthborn mists, and verging fast
To yonder hilly west, each in its turn, —
Hoping the outward calm of things so fair
Might sink, as erst, into a troubled breast,
And breathe their own deep quiet o'er my soul.
Such things have been, but not for hours like these.
My brow is wet with dew, and yet burns on!
My eye drinks in a placid scene, yet fills,
Fills to the brim with silent, blinding tears!
And my heart beats against my aching breast
With throbs of agony! — My Miriam!
Thou in thine innocence wilt die, — ay, die
By a most cruel death! And I am here,
Bound in a strange and vile captivity!
'T was the sole hope, — and now I feel 't was vain!

I have no power to thrust the image stern
Out of my soul, — thee, trembling, cold, and pale,
Bowing thy gentle head with murmured prayers
Beneath rough hands that bind thee to the cross.
Ye gods! the rest, — the rest! — let me go mad,
Ye pitying gods, and so escape the worst,
Knowledge of that I cannot see, yet know.
And if, with strength by thrilling horror given,
I call my wandering fancy home, and chain
Thought to the present —— What were Death's worst pangs,
Could I but meet him in the battle-field,
Waving on high my own red-flashing sword,
Meeting my death-blow in the hottest strife,
Dying with shouts of victory in mine ears,
Frowns on my brow, proud smiles upon my lips?
Alas! the death of brutes, vain struggles, groans,
And butchery, await me here!

Ye stars!
I watch you in your silent march! I mark
How one by one ye kiss yon shadowy hills,
And steal into the chambers of the west,
Sinking for ever from my eyes! Farewell!
I shall not see you rise! A few brief hours,
Ye, in your tranquil beauty, shall look down
Once more upon the spot where now I stand,
And there behold me not. But ye shall see
Token of bloody deed, — the pure turf stained, —

The scabbard haply cast in haste away, —
And boughs strewn rudely o'er the darkest spot
That tells the foul, foul tale of violence!
And what of this? or why, at such an hour,
Revel my thoughts in idle circumstance,
Availing naught? I know not, — I hold not
The clews that guide my spirit's wanderings;
And when they list, wild, dark imaginings
Arise unbidden!
How! ye do grow dim,
Fair stars! The breeze that fans my cheek
Freshens with morn, and yonder glowing moon
Rests her broad rim upon the distant hills,
And I descry a cypress, tall and dark,
Drawn with its spreading boughs against her disk.
My hours ebb low, and I will watch no more
The heavens and earth with dim and aching eyes.
There is no calm within, — and that without
Makes but a broken image on my soul, —
A faithful mirror once of all things fair!

(Sits down on a rock and hides his face with his hands. — A long pause.)

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

Friends! by which path think ye they will approach?

SECOND CHRISTIAN.

By this. We shall descry them from afar,
Threading the trees that fringe the river's bank.

PAULUS.

I had forgotten my stern guards, until

Their hollow voices woke me from vain dreams, —
Vain dreams of other days! — Ye gods, how light!
The sky is full of light, and golden clouds
Are floating softly in the crimson east, —
Fit homes for those pure, bright-winged, angel forms
Which, Miriam says, do serve her God in heaven!
I hear the gentle stir of waking birds
Among the boughs that rustle o'er my head;
And, motionless as rocks, I dimly see
The forms of men beneath the shadowing trees,
Leaning upon their swords, — keeping stern guard
O'er one poor, unarmed wretch! — O, why have I
No weapon in extremity like this? [*A pause.*
What was that soft, sweet note? The prelude faint
To the full matin concert of glad hearts
Joying to see the morn! — Ay, there thou go'st,
Up to the skies, fair bird! and, cleaving swift
The balmy air with soft and busy wing,
Thou pourest forth thy soul in melody!
I envy thee, — though I almost forget
What 't is that vexes me while thus I watch
Thine upward flight! But thou art gone, — and I, —
I am on earth, dark earth, and have no wings
To bear me up to yonder happy realms!

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

Seest thou aught?

SECOND CHRISTIAN.

Naught but the willow-boughs,

Waving and whispering in the rising breeze.

PAULUS.

Ye watch in vain. They will not, cannot come!
My own wild hope hath fled; my heart is sick.
I hear chains rattling on their youthful limbs;
I see them gasping 'mid the dungeon damps,
Closed in with dark, strong walls! They cannot come!

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

The hour draws nigh.

PAULUS.

Ay, on the river's face
Vanish the dull, red specks, that all night long
Glimmered, in faint reflection of the lamps
That lit the student's task, the sick man's couch.
Life wakes throughout the city. — Rome, my home!
How beautiful art thou! — thus stealing forth
From the deep-veiling darkness of the night, —
A wilderness of gardens, palaces,
And stately fanes! — I cannot see the roof,
The one proud roof I seek!

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

Pagan, I know
Thou fear'st not death. Art thou prepared to die?

PAULUS.

Ay, any death, save that thou purposest.
Had I a sword ——

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

Hast thou no need of prayer?

PAULUS.

Of prayer? Why should I pray? Have I not served
The ungrateful gods too faithfully? Alas!
I know not what I say! — Trouble me not,
I do conjure thee, Christian! — Is 't the hour?
A mist is on mine eyes.

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

Not yet. There 's time ——

PAULUS.

O god of day! why are thy chariot-wheels
So slow? Would that thy earliest beam had power
To strike me into ashes! Such a death
Would have no horrors for a Roman youth.
But in cold blood —— Christian! what seest thou?

SECOND CHRISTIAN.

A wreath of mist that sails along the stream.

PAULUS.

I will be patient. Could I think of aught, —
No matter what, — save *her*, and this vile death, —
Such death as cowards die! — Could I but pierce,
Were it but with one brief and shuddering glance,
The cloudy curtain hanging o'er the grave! —
O, new, and strange, and awful, are the thoughts,
Dim forming in this whirling brain! Her words
Come thrilling back upon my soul with might
Most like the might of solemn truth, that wars
With blind and steadfast prejudice! — Ha! look!

Two forms come gliding yonder 'mid the trees!

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

They come! — What may this mean?

PAULUS.

Alas! — alone!

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

With weary steps and slow the pair ascend
The hill of blood, — for such this spot must be!
They are indeed alone! and grief, methinks,
Is in their steps!

PAULUS.

She droops! their prayer was vain;
And my stern father hath forgotten all
That gave his bosom aught of human touch.
His hand hath signed my early doom! — Ye gods!
Bear witness how I bless that bloody fate,
Since on the heads of yonder sinless pair
My father's hand hath wrought no cruel deed!

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

Their safety doth amaze me.

PAULUS.

Nay, the gods
Are sometimes touched by rarest innocence,
And do by miracle melt iron hearts.
Slowly they mount — Ha! hidden by thick boughs —
Christian! I do implore thee, do the deed!
Spare those mild, youthful eyes the sight of blood,

Forth following the dagger's point! Be quick,
And so be merciful!

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

A deed so rash
Would bring down shame upon these silver hairs.
The sun hath not yet risen.

PAULUS.

Give me thy sword!

[*Wresting it from him.*

MIRIAM (*rushing in*).

O, stay! When God hath barely given me strength
To grasp thy robe, must I behold thy blood
Shed by thine own rash hand? *We* deem it guilt!

PAULUS.

Hath thy God given thee pinions? Would, O, would
That I had died before that weary foot
Had climbed the hill!

MIRIAM.

Indeed that foot *is* weary,
And the frame weak; and the internal striving
Of hope, and fear, and haste hath lit no fire
Upon this cheek, — and I stand hovering
On the grave's utmost verge. Yet glad, O, glad
Are the faint throbbings of this heart!

PAULUS.

How! — speak!

MIRIAM.

Doth not my soul speak from my joyous eyes?

They come! for God went with us, and his voice
Spake to the tyrant's heart.

EUPHAS (*entering*).

Ay, they are saved,
And thou, young heathen, spared for happier days.
Now haste thee hence in peace, and meditate
Hereafter, in thy calm and lonely hours,
Upon this night of strife and agony,
And on the faith that nerved young Christian hearts,
And on the strange success that crowned their hopes.

PAULUS.

Mortals are ye, — and more than mortal power
Hath wrought in this! But for *my* gods, — alas!
To them I have not prayed this dreadful night.
O, what is *that* faith worth which thus forsakes
Its votary in trial's darkest hour?
It might have been that thou hadst softly sapped
My youth's belief, — and so it proudly stood
Until the blast came by, — and then it shook.
My gods! I could not bear to think of them!
Why is my brain so dizzy?

MIRIAM.

Friends, watch still!
Soon as ye see our brethren drawing nigh,
The Pagan must away. Paulus, till then,
Is it a sin that dying lips should breathe
Words that pertain to earth and earthly things?

Thy faith I may not hope to shake; — and next
Would I conjure thee never to forget
The voice, the face, the words, the dying love
Of her whose warring love and faith have dug
Her own untimely grave, — have worn away
Her hopes, her nerves, her life, with secret waste.
Paulus! forget thou not, in thy proud halls,
Beneath thy father's smile, in battle-field,
Or, most of all, in the dark, solemn hour
When midnight sheds her spirit on thy soul,
The words I 've uttered in those latter days
Of our wild love, when failing hope, dim fear,
And a vague consciousness that I *must* yield,
Must give thee up to darkness, came to add
A sad and awful fervor to my words.
O, it must work, — it *will!* That memory
Within thy soul will yet have mighty power!
Thou wast not made for base idolatry!

PAULUS.

Beloved! in this hour of hope and joy,
Why is the thought of death upon thy soul?
Why is thy voice more sad than the lone bird's,
Mourning her wounded or imprisoned mate?
Speak of thy faith, love, if thou wilt; and I
Will mutely listen still, — although farewell
Hang with a wild and melancholy tone
On every strain; — but, O, talk not of death!

EUPHAS.

My sister! thou art pale, weary, and worn;
And care hath wrung thy young, elastic soul, —
Wrung out its very energies and hopes!
But in a calmer land we soon shall find
Repose, the wounded spirit's balm, and peace
Shall draw sweet music from thine unstrung mind.
Thy cheek again shall bloom, thine eye grow bright,
Beneath thy father's mild, approving smiles;
Thy seraph voice, ere long, at vesper hour
Shall fearless wake the hymn or murmured prayer,
In full communion with fond, faithful hearts!
O, bright and blessed days await us yet,
Brighter by contrast with the gloomy past!
Dear Miriam, talk thou not of death! — Alas!
That mournful smile!

MIRIAM.

Ye know not, cannot know,
How surely Death has set his mouldering seal
Upon this brow. Must I not *speak* of him?
He is so near me, that his shadow falls
Even now across my path.

EUPHAS.

Thou art deceived!
It cannot be. The sickness of the soul,
Not of the body, is upon thee!

MIRIAM.

Brother,

Both! But 't is long since in the greater pain
I have forgot the less. What were to me
The pangs that racked my heart and throbbing brain,
The fever burning in my veins, the ice
That suddenly, beneath a noonday sun,
At times congealed my blood, while o'er my soul
A fiercer agony held sway? Ere long
I must depart; and I but wait awhile
To bear my aged father's blessing hence.
I would that he might see how peacefully
The spirit of his child will pass. To him
That holy sight will rise, in after times,
Full, full of blessed, calm, consoling thoughts!

PAULUS.

O Miriam! I am here, — and soon, thou say'st,
Must hence. Hast thou no word, no glance, no thought
For me? I look upon thee steadily,
And read not death on that pale cheek! — Beloved!
I do conjure thee, talk of life and hope, —
For there *is* hope, of which thou dost not dream,
If death come not to dash the untasted cup
Into the dust!

MIRIAM.

Of Life and Hope! Such themes
Are fittest for the hour of death, — and they
Are in my mind when most I speak of it.
Euphas! why dost *thou* weep? The heritage

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Of Truth is thine; thou knowest what death is,
And that to me it is no thing of fear.
Thou must not weep! But *thou*, — alas, my Paulus!
The curse to lose the thing thou lovest most,
Without one hope, one comfort in thy grief,
Will soon be on thee! Thou shalt shortly find,
Where hope is not, 't were better memory
Might die! And yet, forget me not! Although
Thou thinkest never to behold again
Her thou didst love, — in this world or the next, —
Forget me not! Though long and proud thy course,
An hour may come ——

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

The sun hath risen!

MIRIAM.

Just God!

EUPHAS.

I had forgotten all! — O sinful heart!
Look! Miriam, look, if thou seest aught! For me,
Mine eyes are glazed with tears.

MIRIAM.

And mine are dim, —
But not with tears.

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

There is no sign of life
Along the river's bank! The sun ——

PAULUS.

'T is vain,
Christians, 't is vain! I knew it from the first.
How ye two 'scaped I know not; but I know
This blood must flow. Ye never will behold
The friends whom ye expect.

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

The leopard yet
Hath never changed his spots. Thy sire craves blood,
The earth craves thine.

MIRIAM.

His blood! what mean thy words?

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

Is not the sun's whole disk above the hills?
And I have three fair boys, whom that same sun
Will watch through torments ere the day be closed.
The murderer's son stands there! Shall I not strike?

MIRIAM.

Art thou a follower of Christ? — Alas!
Thou pure and gentle One! who walkedst earth,
Amid earth's bloodiest, sinless, — from whom
No shame, no wrong, no agony, could draw
One word of bitterness, — thou hast not left
Thy spirit in the hearts of all who bear
Thy holy name.

EUPHAS.

The guiltless shall not die.

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

Are ye Thraseno's children? Shall your sire
Hang agonizing yonder on the cross,
And ye stand here, bending your tearful eyes
Upon the tyrant's hope and joy? Young friends,
For some dark purpose did he spare two lives.
But for our other friends, — the hour is past, —
They come not. Ye were mocked, — and just revenge
Leans on that youth and beckons us! — My boys!
My three dear boys! — He dies!

MIRIAM.

Stay, Jew in heart!
What is 't emerges from the grove?

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

Ha! — where?

EUPHAS.

'T is so. I see them plain, — a feeble band, —
Loosed from the spoiler's grasp. O Thou on high,
Whose mighty hand doth hold the proud man's heart,
Thine be the praise!

MIRIAM.

Down on thy knees, rash man!
Look on thy bloodless hands, and render thanks
Where thanks are due.

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

I am condemned!
And 'mid the joy wherewith I shall receive
My children to these arms will shame arise.

MIRIAM.

And penitence be born of shame. Haste, Paulus!
Thou must away.

PAULUS.

Peace! — peace!

MIRIAM.

The hour is come.
It was the promise to thy sire ——

PAULUS.

But, maiden!
The promise was not mine. It binds me not;
And of thy father I have that to ask
May give a dark mind peace.

EUPHAS.

What may it mean?
Miriam, see you the faces of the group?

MIRIAM.

O, no! Whate'er I gaze upon is robed
In strange and lurid light. The grave's dim hues
Are gathering fast o'er earth. — Art thou not pale?

EUPHAS.

It may be. Fear and doubt are on my soul.
Paulus, look thou! Yon troop come not, methinks,
Like prisoners let loose, like victims snatched
From agony and death! No buoyancy
Is in their steps, — no song upon their lips, —
No triumph on their brows! They pause! — now closer
They draw their feeble ranks!

PAULUS.

Grief and dismay
Are with that group.

EUPHAS.

O God! I see him not!
My father is not there!

MIRIAM.

Nay, Euphas, stay!
Kneel humbly here with me, and pray for strength.
Wilt thou forsake me in an hour like this? [*A pause.*

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

They come!
Raise, — raise your drooping heads!

EUPHAS.

I dare not look.

(CHRISTIANS *enter, and the group, opening, displays the body of* THRASENO *on a bier.*)

PAULUS (*springing forward*).

O foul and bloody deed! — and wretched son,
That knows too well whose treachery hath done this!

AN AGED CHRISTIAN.

Thus saith the man of blood: — "My word is kept.
I send you him I promised. Have ye kept
Your faith with me? If so, there is naught more
Between us three. Bury your dead, — and fly!"

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

A ruffian's strangling hand hath grasped this throat,
And on the purple lip convulsion still

Lingers, with awful tale of violence!
O, fearful was the strife from which arose
Our brother's spirit to its peaceful home!
Let grief, let wrath, let each unquiet thought,
Be still, and round the just man's dust ascend
The voice of prayer.

PAULUS.

Not yet! O, not *quite* yet!
Hear me, ye pale and horror-stricken throng!
Hear me, thou sobbing boy! My Miriam, turn, —
Turn back thy face from the dim world of death,
And hear thy lover's voice! — What seest thou
In the blue heavens, with fixed and eager gaze?

MIRIAM.

Angels are gathering in the eastern sky, —
The wind is playing 'mid their glittering plumes, —
The sunbeams dance upon their golden harps, —
Welcome is on their fair and glorious brows!
Hath not a holy spirit passed from earth,
Whom ye come forth to meet, seraphic forms?
O, fade not, fade not yet! — or take me too,
For earth grows dark beneath my dazzled eye!

PAULUS.

Miriam! in mercy spread not yet thy wings!
Spurn me not from the gate that opes for thee!

MIRIAM.

In which world do I stand? A voice there was

Of prayer and woe. *That* must have rung on earth!
Say on.

PAULUS.

Christians! I must indeed say on,
Or my full heart will break! — No heathen is 't
On whom ye gaze with lowering, angry eyes.
My father's blood, — his name, his faith, his gods, —
I here abjure; and only ask your prayers,
The purifying water on my brow,
And words of hope to soothe my penitence,
Ere I atone my father's crimes with blood. [*Silence.*
And will none speak? Am I indeed cast off, —
Rejected utterly? Will no one teach
The sinner how to frame the Christian's prayer,
Help me to know the Christian's God aright,
Wash from my brow the deep red stains of guilt?
Must I then die in ignorance and sin?

MIRIAM.

O earth! be not so busy with my soul!
Paulus! what wouldest thou?

PAULUS.

The rite that binds
New converts to your peaceful faith.

MIRIAM.

Good brethren,
Hear ye his prayer! Search ye the penitent,
Bear him forth with you in your pilgrimage,

And when his soul in earnest hath drunk in
The spirit of Christ's law, seal him for heaven! —
And now, — would that my chains were broke! Half freed,
My spirit struggles 'neath the dust that lies
So heavy on her wings! — Paulus, we part.
But, O, how different is the parting hour
From that which crushed my hopeless spirit erst!
Joy, — joy and triumph now ——

PAULUS.

O, name not joy!

MIRIAM.

Why not? If but one ray of light from Heaven
Hath reached thy soul, I may indeed rejoice!
Even thus, in coming days, from martyrs' blood
Shall earnest saints arise to do God's work.
And thus with slow, sure, silent step shall Truth
Tread the dark earth, and scatter Light abroad,
Till Peace and Righteousness awake, and lead
Triumphant, in the bright and joyous blaze,
Their happy myriads up to yonder skies!

EUPHAS.

Sister! with such a calm and sunny brow
Stand'st thou beside our murdered father's bier?

MIRIAM.

Euphas, thy hand! — Ay, clasp thy brother's hand!
Ye fair and young apostles! go ye forth, —
Go side by side beneath the sun and storm,

A dying sister's blessing on your toils!
When ye have poured the oil of Christian peace
On passions rude and wild, — when ye have won
Dark, sullen souls from wrath and sin to God, —
Whene'er ye kneel to bear upon your prayers
Repentant sinners up to yonder heaven,
Be it in palace, — dungeon, — open air, —
'Mid friends, — 'mid raging foes, — in joy, — in grief, —
Deem not ye pray alone; — man never doth!
A sister spirit, lingering near, shall fill
The silent air around you with her prayers,
Waiting till ye too lay your fetters down,
And come to your reward! — Go fearless forth;
For glorious truth wars with you, and shall reign.

[*Seeing the bier.*

My father! sleepest thou? — Ay, a sound sleep.
Dreams *have* been there, — O, horrid dreams! — but now
The silver beard heaves not upon thy breast,
The hand I press is deadly, deadly cold,
And thou wilt dream, wilt never suffer, more.
Why gaze I on this clay? It was not this, —
Not this I reverenced and loved! ——
My friends,
Raise ye the dirge; and though I hide my face
In my dead father's robe, think not I weep.
I would not have the sight of those I love
Too well — even at this solemn hour too well —

Disturb my soul's communion with the blest!
My brother, sob not so!

DIRGE.

Shed not the wild and hopeless tear
Upon our parted brother's bier;
With heart subdued and steadfast eye,
O, raise each thought to yonder sky!

Aching brow and throbbing breast
In the silent grave shall rest;
But the clinging dust in vain
Weaves around the soul its chain.

Spirit, quit this land of tears,
Hear the song of rolling spheres;
Shall our wild and selfish prayers
Call thee back to mortal cares?

Sainted spirit! fare thee well!
More than mortal tongue can tell
Is the joy that even now
Crowns our blessed martyr's brow!

EUPHAS.

Paulus, arise!
We must away. Thy father's wrath ——

PAULUS.

O, peace!
My Miriam, speak to us! — She doth not stir!

EUPHAS.

Methought I saw her ringlets move!

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

Alas!
'T was but the breeze that lifted those dark locks!
They never will wave more!

EUPHAS.

It cannot be!
Let me but look upon her face! — O God!
Death sits in that glazed eye!

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

Ay, while we sung
Her father's dirge, across the young and fair
I saw death's shudder pass. Nay, turn not pale.
Borne on the solemn strain, her spirit soared
Most peacefully on high. ——
Chastened ye are,
And bound by sorrow to your holy task.
Arise, — and in your youthful memories
Treasure the end of innocence. — Away,
Beneath far other skies, weep, if ye can,
The gain of those ye loved.

EUPHAS.

Lift this fair dust. —

My brother ! speechless, tearless grief for her
Who listeneth for thy prayers ?

PAULUS.

My mind is dark.
The faith which she bequeathed must lighten it.
Come forth, and I will learn. — O Miriam !
Can thy bright faith e'er comfort grief like mine ?

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

A DRAMATIC FRAGMENT.

CHARACTERS.

KING HENRY THE SEVENTH.
LADY CATHERINE, *the wife of Perkin Warbeck.*
CLARA, *her attendant.*
SIR FLORIAN, *a friend of Perkin Warbeck.*

SCENE. — *A castle on the sea-coast, in Cornwall.*
TIME. — *The autumn of the year* 1499.

LADY CATHERINE *and* CLARA.

LADY CATHERINE.

OPEN that casement toward the sea, my Clara.
I gaze in vain along the hilly waste,
Watching the lone and solitary road
Until mine eyes are strained. The dull day wanes,
The sad November day, — and yet there come
No tidings from my lord! Ay! that is well!
Sit thou where I have sat these many hours
In patience sorrowful; and summon me

With a most joyous cry, if thy kind watch
Be more successful. Sea! for ever tossing!
Thy very motion is so beautiful,
So wild and spirit-stirring, as I turn
From the bleak, changeless moor, all desolate,
I bless each wave that breaks against yon cliff.
O mighty ocean! thou art free, — art free!
Dash high, thou foamy-crested billow, high!
That was a leap, which sent the snowy spray
Up to yon o'erhanging crag, and forth
The screaming sea-bird sprang rejoicingly.
Clara, do not forget thy watch.

CLARA.

Nay, lady,
Return not yet; thou shalt have warning swift,
If but a lonely traveller tread the heath.

LADY CATHERINE.

Yes! I will trust thee, and again look forth
Upon the glorious sea. In my youth's prime
Is it not strange I thus should love to gaze
On a wild ocean-view and frowning sky?
O sorrow! fear! and dark suspense! what change
Ye work in brief, brief space on careless hearts!
Methinks it was not many months ago
Childhood was round me with its rainbow dreams;
Then came the glittering vision of a court,
Dear Scotland's court, where on my bridal hour

A gracious monarch smiled, and silently
Time stole the wings of love. My husband! dearest!
Our happy hours were few. The echoes still
Rang back the harp's sweet nuptial melody,
When came a fearful voice, — I scarce knew whence, —
But terrible, O, terrible it was!
The dew scarce dry upon the snowy rose
I wore that morn, when it was wet afresh
With tears of parting! 'T was but for a time,
He said, and we should meet again. My heart
Clings to the promise sweet, — " We meet again ";
But when, O, when? Ye vain remembrances,
Depart! Let me survey the heath once more.
The ocean breeze has fanned the pain away
From my hot brow, and now it wearies me
To look upon those restless waves. Their roar
Comes faintly up from yonder wet, black rocks,
Monotonous and hoarse; the mighty clouds
Sweep endless o'er the heavens; I am sad,
And all things sadden me. They 'll set him free!
They surely will, my Clara! Thou hast said it
Full twenty times this day, and yet again
I fain would hear such empty words of cheer.
What is yon speck upon the dusky heath?
Look! — look!

CLARA.

I have been watching it, dear lady.

'T is but a lonely tree.

LADY CATHERINE.

No, no, it moves!
My heart's solicitude doth give me sight
Keener than thine; — it moves; — it comes this way.
What may its form and bearing be? It nears
Yon pile of rocks. Clara, such speed denotes
A horseman fleet! Peace, heart! throb not so fast.

CLARA.

The gray mist settles down and mocks thine eye.
It is a peasant, toiling through the furze.

LADY CATHERINE.

Nay! 't is a mounted knight! Yon hillock passed,
Thou wilt descry him plain.

CLARA.

'T is so! he rides,
He rides for life! Is 't not the jet black steed
Sir Florian mounts?

LADY CATHERINE.

It is my husband's friend!
'T is he that rushes on with such mad haste.
Tidings at last! — O Clara, I am faint!

CLARA.

Be calm, my much-tried mistress; joy still comes
Close upon apprehension.

LADY CATHERINE.

Is it so?

I cannot tell. Would bad news spur him thus?

CLARA.

Believe me, no. Be calm.

LADY CATHERINE.

I will, — I will.

Is he not here? he 's wondrous slow, methinks.

CLARA.

The noble charger 's spent; his smoking sides
Are flecked with foam, and every gallant leap
Seems as 't would be his last. Why doth his rider
Cast back such troubled glances o'er the moor?
Now to the ground he springs! the brave steed drops!
Lady, look up! Sir Florian is at hand.

Enter FLORIAN.

FLORIAN.

Where is the Lady Catherine! O, away!
Fly for your life!

LADY CATHERINE.

Fly? and from whom? or why?

SIR FLORIAN.

Question me not; I do conjure you, fly.
The danger 's imminent; — moments are precious.
Down to the beach; — take boat without delay.
It is your husband's bidding.

LADY CATHERINE.

O, thank Heaven
For those two words! Am I to meet him, then?

SIR FLORIAN.

No, lady, no! but I have been delayed,
Crossed, intercepted, and wellnigh cut off,
Till on a moment's grace your life depends.
The king pursues.

LADY CATHERINE.

The king! in mercy say,
Where is my husband?

SIR FLORIAN.

London Tower held still
The princely wanderer, when the rumor came
That Henry's wrath burnt hot 'gainst thee, sweet lady!
And that the place of thy retreat was known.
Fly! 't is thy husband's word.

LADY CATHERINE.

Imprisoned still!
Take me to London, noble Florian. Nay,
How can I live but in that same dark Tower,
Where they have pinioned down my gallant lord, —
My noble, much-wronged lord? Not yet set free!
He hath been pardoned once, if men told true!

SIR FLORIAN.

Come, fair and most unhappy!

LADY CATHERINE.

I have heard
Such fearful tales of bloody murders done
In the mysterious circuit of those walls!

What, didst thou leave him well?

SIR FLORIAN.

In truth I did,
Though somewhat wan and wasted; anxious, too,
For thy most precious life. Come, I conjure thee!

CLARA.

There is a strange and hollow sound abroad!
'T is not the sea!

SIR FLORIAN.

No, nor the sweeping wind.
It is the tramp of steeds fast galloping!

CLARA.

They come! like mounted giants looming now
Through the dim mist.

SIR FLORIAN.

She 's lost! Why lingered I?

CLARA.

Quick! there is time; — our startled menials now
Bar fast the outer doors; — yon staircase leads
Down through a vaulted passage to the shore.
Still motionless, sweet mistress?

LADY CATHERINE.

Was he worn
And pale, saidst thou? Truly I do rejoice
The king draws nigh, for on my bended knees
Will I entreat to share my husband's cell.

CLARA.

She is distraught!

SIR FLORIAN.

Most gracious lady, list!
It is *your* blood this haughty monarch seeks,
And with a vow against the innocent
His soul is burdened; do not wildly dream
That he will pity thee. And for thy lord ——

LADY CATHERINE.

Pause not! I do conjure thee, speak!

SIR FLORIAN.

He hath been tried, condemned ——

LADY CATHERINE.

And slain?

CLARA.

That shriek
Doth guide them hither.

SIR FLORIAN.

Nay, he lives as yet,
But vainly ——

LADY CATHERINE.

O, God bless thee for that word!
He lives! Monarch of England, come!

CLARA.

Hark, hark!
That crash, — the doors are burst!

SIR FLORIAN.

Her doom is sealed!

Enter KING HENRY *and attendants.*

KING HENRY.

We are in time; — the bird hath not escaped.
Those hoof-tracks made me fear, some traitor fleet
Had warned her from the nest. Ha! frowning youth!
Whence comest thou? What may thine errand be,
That brought thee hither in such furious haste?

SIR FLORIAN.

Thou well mightst guess; 't was from thy bloody fangs
I vainly hoped one victim to withdraw.
She chose to trust thy clemency, — alas!

KING HENRY.

Alas, indeed! bold heart is thine, and tongue
As bold. But garb so travel-stained, fair Sir,
Fits not a lady's bower; and thou 'lt not love,
Perchance, to fix that pity-beaming eye
Upon my deeds of clemency. Take hence
This youthful rebel, and let manacles
Bind those officious hands.

[*Exit* SIR FLORIAN *with two officers.*

Now for our work.
We will survey this far-famed Scottish lily,
Ere the sharp steel do crop its drooping head.
Indeed she 's wondrous fair! Hast thou no voice,
Pale suppliant? Its music must be rich,

And e'en more eloquent than those clasped hands,
That sweet, imploring face. Speak, for thy moments
Flit into nothingness, and if thou hast
One last petition for thy dying hour ——

LADY CATHERINE.

My husband, gracious king!

KING HENRY.

What, art thou mad?

LADY CATHERINE.

Let me but see his face! O, drag me hence
With scorn and violence to share his doom,
And I will bless thy name.

KING HENRY.

She hath gone wild
With sudden terror. He 's condemned, sweet lady,
To die a shameful death, and thou this hour —
This very hour — must perish in thy youth.
So bids my needful policy. Thinkest thou
Of aught but precious life, with such a fate
Darkening around thee, fair one? Now, ask aught
But life ——

LADY CATHERINE.

Life, — life! mere breath! and what is that?
Take it, my sovereign! *He* who gave it me
Will call my spirit home to heaven and peace
When this poor dust lies low. I have no prayer
To offer for my wretched life, if joy

Lie dead and buried in my husband's grave.
Is there no mercy for my gallant lord?
Crowned monarch, speak! what can thy mightiness
Grant thee beyond the holy power to bless?

KING HENRY.

I must be stern in words as well as deeds.
I charge thee, if thou hast a last request, —
A dying message to the noble house
Whence thou art sprung ——

LADY CATHERINE.

My home! — forsaken home!
It was for him I left the heathy hills
Of my own Scotland; there we had not perished
Thus in life's early bloom. May blessings rest
On the old quiet castle, and each head
Its gray roof shelters! How those ancient halls
Will ring a wild lament, when comes the tale
That England's broken faith hath widowed me,
And laid me, all unmourned, in English dust!
Thy fame, proud king, thy fame!

KING HENRY.

Ha! dost thou dare
Breathe such reproach? Hear, then, unthinking girl,
Since thou dost stir my wrath! Dost thou not know,
Daughter of Gordon's stainless house, that thou
Art to a mean and base impostor linked?
Duped and beguiled by crafty words, thy king

Gave with his own pledged faith thy maiden hand
To Margaret's low-born tool; — and he hath lied,
Lied his own life away, and stained his soul
With foulest perjury, to steal the crown
Of glorious England from her lawful king.
The fraud is plain; — the forfeit, his mean life; —
And men with eyes amazed shrink back from him
They followed in a dream. Awake thou, too;
Die not in thy delusion.

LADY CATHERINE.

Now be still,
My swelling heart! Speak calmly, quivering lips!
Man! — I will call thee monarch now no more,
While ring thy words of insult in mine ear, —
Thou dost defame the husband I adore,
And, in mine hour of fear and agony,
With cruel calumnies dost strive to rend
The one true heart that loves him yet. Enough!
Unkingly words were thine; — but I depart
Where earthly slanders cannot reach mine ear.
Give orders; — let me die.

KING HENRY.

Nay, it is past; —
It was a flash of momentary heat,
For of a fiery race I came. Alas! I mourn
That in cold blood, fair lady, I must doom
A creature young and innocent as thou

To an untimely grave. And, if I gaze
Longer upon that brow ingenuous,
My purposes will surely melt. Farewell!

LADY CATHERINE.

Stay, — stay! hear but a few brief words, my king!
Not for myself I plead, not of my life,
My worthless life, would speak; — but fame, *his* fame,
Dearer than kingdoms to his noble heart,
Claims of his wife one burst of warm defence.
If royal blood flow not within the veins
Of him I loved and wedded, that deceit
Was never his! The artful may have played
Upon his open nature, and have lured
Their victim to the toils for purposes
They dared not own; — and now they may forsake, —
O God of heaven! *I* never will desert
My mocked and much-wronged husband, though false men
Shrink from him as a serpent. I may die
A bloody death, but, with my last, last breath,
Will still avow my trusting love, and sue
For mercy on his innocence.

KING HENRY.

Now, lady ——

LADY CATHERINE.

O, peace! — unless I read thy restless eye aright.
Wilt thou not look on me?

(*Casting herself at his feet.*)

Doth thy heart swell

With an unwonted fulness? Ha! the vest
Heaves glittering on thy breast! thou then art moved,—
And, if tears choke me not, I will dare plead
Even for him, — him whom I may not name.

KING HENRY.

Loosen my robe; — away, — I will not hear!

LADY CATHERINE.

Thou must, — thou wilt; — though slanderous tongues do say
Thy heart is steel, I will believe it not,
While on that gracious face I gaze. Thou 'lt hear me.
His trust in flattering tongues for ever cured,
His wild hopes mocked, his young ambition quenched,
His wisdom ripened by adversity,
Forth from his prison will my husband come,
A subject true and faithful to thy sway.
And I will lead him far away from courts,
Into the heart of lonely Scottish hills;
There by some quiet lake his home shall be,
So still and happy, that his stormy youth,
With all its perilous follies, will but seem
As a dim memory of some former state,
In some forgotten world. He shall grow old
Ruling my simple vassals with such power
As a brave hand and gentle heart may use;
And never, never ask again, what blood
Flows in his veins; nor dream one idle dream
Of courtiers, palaces, and sparkling crowns,

While these fond lips can whisper winning words,
And woman's ever-busy love can weave
Ties strong, but viewless, round his manly heart.
Thou 'lt hear it not, but in that blessed home
How will I murmur in my nightly prayers
The name of England's king!
He 's free! — he 's pardoned!
That tearful smile all graciously declares
I am not widowed in my wretched youth!
I shall behold his noble face again.
God bless thee, generous prince! and give thee power,
Through long, long years, to bind up bleeding hearts,
And use thy sceptre as a wand of peace!
My tears, — they flowed not when I prayed, — but now
The grateful gush declares, when language fails,
The ecstasy of joy!

(*Enter a messenger, who presents a packet to the king. He breaks it open, and, after casting his eye over it, turns away abruptly.*)

CLARA.

The king is troubled!

KING HENRY (*after a pause*).

My sweet petitioner, look up!

LADY CATHERINE.

Alas!
I dare not.

KING HENRY.

Nay, why now such sudden fear?

What sawest thou mirrored in my face?

LADY CATHERINE.

A nameless terror robs me of all strength.
That packet! — O, these quick and dread forebodings!
Speak! it were mercy, should thine accents kill!

KING HENRY.

Thou hast a noble spirit; — rouse it now,
Daughter of Gordon!

LADY CATHERINE.

King! say on, — say all!

KING HENRY.

Art thou prepared?

LADY CATHERINE.

What matters it? Speak, — speak!
Prepared! what, with this dizzy, whirling brain?
Comes fortitude amid such fierce suspense?
Tell me the worst, — and show thy pity so.

KING HENRY.

Blanched, — gasping, — but angelic still! What words
Can sheathe the piercing news? Thy suit
Was all too late, true wife! He is in heaven.

[LADY CATHERINE *faints*.

"Pale rose of England!" men have named thee well.
What brought me hither? What? To murder thee?
O, purpose horrible! I cannot think
This bosom ever harboured scheme so fierce.
Dark, bloody policy! it is dissolved

Beneath the gentle light of innocence,
Melted by woman's true and faithful love,
Conquered by grief it is not mine to heal.
The dead may not return, — but *she* may live!
Quit not the broken-hearted, weeping maid!
She hath been true till death. And I will give
Shelter to sorrow such as these stern eyes
Ne'er saw till now. To my own gentle queen
Will I consign the victim of harsh times.
Thou shouldst have bloomed in sunshine, blighted rose!
And ne'er have been transplanted from thy bower
To waste such fragrant virtues 'mid the storm.

NOTE.

In the reign of Henry the Seventh of England, a pretender to the crown appeared, in the person of Perkin Warbeck, a youth who declared himself to be Richard, Duke of York, second son of Edward the Fourth. He was supported by Margaret of York, the Duke of Burgundy, and other powerful friends; and the young king of Scotland went so far as to bestow on him the hand of the Lady Catherine Gordon, nearly allied to the royal family, and celebrated for her beauty. She remained fondly attached to him through his reverses, when all England had forsaken him; and it is said that the cold heart of Henry was so softened by her loveliness, constancy, and sorrow for her husband, that he relented in his bloody purpose, and, instead of taking her life, as he had intended, placed her honorably in his queen's household. Warbeck had adopted the title of the "Pale Rose of England"; but the people transferred it to her. See Mackintosh's *History of England*, Phil. ed., p. 197.

TO MY MOTHER'S MEMORY.

My mother! weary years have passed, since last
I met thy gentle smile; and sadly then
It fell upon my young and joyous heart.
There was a mortal paleness on thy cheek,
And well I knew they bore thee far away
With a vain hope to mend the broken springs,—
The springs of life. And bitter tears I shed
In childhood's short-lived agony of grief,
When soothing voices said that thou wert gone,
And that I must not weep, for thou wert blest.
Full many a flower has bloomed upon thy grave,
And many a winter's snow has melted there;
Childhood has passed, and youth is passing now,
And scatters paler roses on my path;
Dim and more dim my fancy paints thy form,
Thy mild blue eye, thy cheek so thin and fair,
Touched, when I saw thee last, with hectic flush,
Telling, in solemn beauty, of the grave.
Mine ear hath lost the accents of thy voice,

And faintly o'er my memory comes at times
A glimpse of joys that had their source in thee,
Like one brief strain of some forgotten song.
And then at times a blessed dream comes down,
Missioned, perhaps, by thee from brighter realms,
And, wearing all the semblance of thy form,
Gives to my heart the joy of days gone by.
With gushing tears I wake. O, art thou not
Unseen and bodiless around my path,
Watching with brooding love about thy child?
Is it not so, my mother? I will not
Think it a fancy, wild, and vain, and false,
That spirits good and pure as thine descend,
Like guardian angels round the few they loved,
Oft intercepting coming woes, and still
Joying on every beam that gilds our paths,
And waving snowy pinions o'er our heads
When midnight slumbers close our aching eyes.

1821.

OMNIPRESENCE.

THERE is an unseen Power around,
  Existing in the silent air;
Where treadeth man, where space is found,
  Unheard, unknown, that Power is there.

And not when bright and busy day
  Is round us with its crowds and cares,
And not when night with solemn sway
  Bids awe-hushed souls breathe forth in prayers,—

Not when on sickness' weary couch
  He writhes with pain's deep, long-drawn groan,—
Not when his steps in freedom touch
  The fresh green turf,— is man *alone*.

In proud Belshazzar's gilded hall,
  'Mid music, lights, and revelry,
That Present Spirit looked on all,
  From crouching slave to royalty.

When sinks the pious Christian's soul,
And scenes of horror daunt his eye,
He hears it whispered through the air,
"A Power of mercy still is nigh."

The Power that watches, guides, defends,
Till man becomes a lifeless sod,
Till earth is naught, — naught, earthly friends, —
That omnipresent Power — is *God.*

1821.

THE PEARL-DIVER'S SONG.

Down, down to the depths of the sea,
With a fearless plunge, I go,
Down to the realms ye ne'er may see,
By a path ye cannot know.

Sun! shine bright in the high blue sky!
Winds! o'er the curling billows fly!
Far from the light and air of day
Lieth my dark and trackless way.
O'er my head the green waves close,
Yellow the light around me grows;
Ringing and rushing sounds I hear,
Down to a darker realm I steer.
Upwards and downwards, shooting by,
Numberless creatures I descry,
Busy with fin and glittering fair,
Winging their way like birds in the air.
Deeper I sink, and phantoms strange
Through the dim depths, half formless, range,

Creatures the upper sea ne'er knew,
Shapes such as fancy never drew.
Balanced awhile, I wait and quake,
Till welters along the huge sea-snake,—
Till, looking on me with stony eye,
Monsters unnamed go rolling by.

I have scaped the shark's wide-gaping jaw,
I have broken unscathed the mighty law ;
Here, on old ocean's bed of sand,
Hurtless, a living man I stand.
Where the winds of heaven never blew,
Where the gentle skies ne'er dropped their dew,
Where an awful calm and stillness reign,
And strange, dim lights the waters stain,
Where the foot of man hath never trod,
Pacing the firm white sand unshod,
I pluck from the rock the clinging shell
That bears the pearl in its rough, dark cell.

I stay not to wander 'mid coral groves,
Where the green-haired mermaid singing roves,—
I stay not to look on mouldering bones,
And the thousand wrecks the ocean owns.
The pearl, from its home beneath the waves,
The pearl from the depth of the ocean caves,

The pure white pearl in triumph I bear
To the joyous realms of light and air!
Up, up to the realms above,
Up to the summer sun I love,
Where my dripping limbs that sun shall dry,
And the winds of earth a welcome sigh.
I look on the light my glad eye craves,
Proudly I ride the bounding waves,
Bearing my treasure, and like a dream
The sunless realms I have visited seem.

So shall the beams of heaven break
On the soul that wins that glorious stake, —
On the soul no syren could entice,
That hath sought and found the pearl of price,
And longs from its weary task below
Up to its home of light to go.

1825.

ON FOR EVER.

Winds of the sky! ye hurry by
On your strong and busy wings,
And your might is great, and your song is high,
And true is the tale it sings.
"On, on, for ever and aye!
Round the whole earth lieth our way,
On, on, for we may not stay."

Murmuring stream! like a soft dream
Goest thou stealing along,
Pausing not in the shade or gleam,
And this is thy ceaseless song.
"On, on, for ever and aye!
Down to the deep lieth my way,
On, for I may not stay."

Queen of yon high and dim blue vault,
Gliding past many a star,
'Mid their bright orbs thou dost not halt,
And a voice comes down from thy car:—

" On, on, for ever and aye !
Round the whole earth lieth my way,
On, for I may not stay."

Thoughts of my mind, ye hurry on ;
Whence ye do come I may not know,
But from my soul ye straight are gone,
In a ceaseless, ceaseless flow.
" On, on, for ever and aye !
By a behest we must obey,
On, for we may not stay."

Man may not stay ! there is no rest
On earth for the good man's foot ;
He should go forth on errands blest,
And toil for unearthly fruit.
On, on, for ever and aye !
Idle not precious hours away,
On, for ye may not stay !

Sit ye not down in sloth's dark bower,
Where shades o'er the spirit fall,
Pause not to wreathe the sunny flower
That is worn in pleasure's hall.
On, on, for ever and aye !
Duties spring up along your way,
Do good, — for ye may not stay !

1825.

BANNOCKBURN.

RED light was in the western sky,
One star was twinkling lone and high,
The evening breeze came murmuring by,
But not 'mid bending grass to sigh.
The wild-flowers it would woo were crushed;
At noon the storm had o'er them rushed,
Fierce hoof, fleet foot! When eve came on,
The dews and breezes found them gone.

The wild-flowers! were *they* all that lay
Crushed out of beauty 'neath the ray
Of that lone star? Alas! there came
That day the dazzling light of fame
Upon the green and peaceful plain,
Bought with red blood, and strife, and pain;
And fearfully abroad were spread
Dark signs of life, whence life had fled.
Ay, the cool breeze but poured its breath
O'er the dim starlight field of death,

And cooled the burning lip and brow
In shame and agony laid low,
Or called back wandering sense and life
To the dull eye once closed on strife,
Or o'er each youthful hero slain
Crept with its low and dirge-like strain.
Lights from the victor's tent flashed out,
And from the long white camp a shout
Aye and anon rose up, and shook
Faint, wounded frames in every nook
Where they had crept away to die.

But in one stately tent, O, why
Blazed there no torch, arose no voice,
As if to bid the stars rejoice?
The groan, the deep, half-stifled groan,
Of manly sorrow, struggling, lone,
Came from that tent; there sat the Bruce!
The fiery Edward! tigers loose
Not half so fierce in war, the hind
Petted by beauty not more kind
When to its scabbard went the blade,
And from his brow the helm was laid.
There sat the Bruce, — dark, dark, alone!
O'er his rude table wildly thrown
His warrior arms, and sadly bowed
His face, and quenched its lightnings proud.

Fast rolled his hidden tears, and grief, —
Man's grief, that never courts relief
Till spent in whirlwind agony, —
Mixed with his triumph misery.
He mourned the dead, the one brave youth
His spirit loved with such deep truth
As dwells in young, free, noble hearts
Bound each to each till life departs.
He mourned the dead, and in that hour
Proud thoughts of victory had no power;
The light from glory's brow had fled, —
She could not bring him back the dead!

"My Walter!" — rose the low, deep tones,
Blended with choking sobs and groans, —
"They say a glorious battle 's won,
And few are slain; but *thou* art one
By whose most precious blood was bought
My victory! Would God had brought
Deep ruin on my arms this day,
So *thou* hadst not been snatched away!"

O man! blind man! that very morn
Saw in his breast the sole hope born
Of victory, — defeat and shame
The only ills whose dread could claim
Averting prayers from that proud heart!
Now what could granted prayers impart?

Fame came, too dearly bought to bless,
And victory came, but valueless! —
So was it then, so shall it be!
A blank, a blight, 'mid victory
O'er aught, except the foe within, —
The struggling, warring rebel, *Sin!*

1828.

THE SICKLY BABE.

MINE infant was a poor, weak thing,
No strength those little arms to fling,
His cheek was pale and very thin,
And none a smile from him could win
Save I, — his mother! O my child,
How could they think my love so wild?

I never said it, but I knew,
From the first breath my baby drew,
That I must soon my joy resign, —
That he was God's, not mine, not mine!
But think you that I loved him less
Because I saw his feebleness?

To others, senseless seemed his eye;
They looked, and only thought, "He 'll die";
To me, that little suffering frame
Came freighted with a spirit's claim, —
Came full of blessing to my heart, —
Brought thoughts I could to none impart.

The pale, pale bud bloomed not on earth ;
Blighted and stricken from his birth,
A few short months upon my breast
He lay, then smiled and went to rest :
And all forgot him, born to die,
All, all forgot, — save God and I.

MY WATCH.

LAST night I lay with wakeful eyes,
With eyes that ached and longed to sleep ;
And as the weary hours went by,
One sound, beside the night-wind's sigh,
Stole on mine ear.

Unseen beneath my pillow lay
My little watch, and until day
Its pleasant voice went ticking on,
Speaking of friends and things long gone ;
I loved to hear.

Ay ! take my gems, my sparkling rings,
My bird, although he sweetly sings,
My books, beguilers of lone hours,
My loved and almost loving flowers,
But leave me this.

Not for thy pearls and golden case,
Not for thy true, familiar face,
Not for thy gentle midnight song,
Dear watch! have I loved thee so long,
Through woe and bliss.

The hours thou markest cling to thee,
Through thee my life still speaks to me;
The wedding sunshine, — when *he* gave, —
The gloom that settled on his grave,
Come at thy voice.

I see again the cradle small,
Where lay my little one, my all,
Lulled by thy steady tick above,
Or touching thee with timid love,
A plaything choice.

The feverish nights, so sick, so long,
When flesh was weak, and faith was strong,
When sunk the fire, and round me played
Strange shadows, as I lay and prayed
For soft release; —

The days when, bounding through each vein,
Health made me glad of life again,

And while my busy fingers flew,
Unconsciously my nature grew
In strength and peace; —

All these sweet, solemn thoughts arise,
While rest on thee my tearful eyes,
Companion of my holiest hours!
Coffined with me, and wreathed with flowers,
Thou shalt be laid.

Machinery of wondrous skill
Wears out, in spite of mortal will;
Mine must, thou gently warnest me;
The springs run down, and soon rest we
In quiet shade.

Peace, peace and stillness for us both.
To quit life's uses art thou loth?
Then, busy monitor, tick on;
To higher tasks must I be gone:
Stay thou, and teach!

Not of the past alone speak thou:
Look calmly on the youthful brow,
Speak gently in the dead of night, —
O, of the Future talk, — of Light,
Which man may reach!

JUSTICE AND MERCY.

I saw in my dream a countless throng,
By a mighty whirlwind hurried along,—
  Hurried along through boundless space,
With a fearful onward, onward sweep,
Looking like beings roused from sleep,
  Till they met their Maker face to face.

Then consciousness waked in each dark eye,
The mercy-seat shone above on high,
  And a timid, wild, but hopeful gaze
Those wandering spirits upwards cast,
As if they had cause to joy at last,
  When they saw the seat of judgment blaze.

"Justice!" they cried, with sound so clear,
The stars of the universe needs must hear;
  "Justice!" again, again rang out,
As of those who felt the hour had come
Their earth-choked lips should no more be dumb,
  And all God's worlds must hear their shout.

They were the souls of myriad men,
Who had died, and none cared how or when, —
  Who had dwelt on earth as slaves, — as slaves!
They were the men by death set free,
  And flocking came from their million graves, —
They who on earth had scarce dared *be*,
  Shaking the bonds from their half-crushed souls,
  Uttering a cry that rent the poles,
For they knew that God would hear them then.

And afar I beheld a smaller band,
  With hands clasped over their downcast eyes;
For before the blaze they could not stand,
  And all space seemed full of groans and sighs.
Naked, affrighted, pierced with light,
  They knew themselves and their deeds at last;
From their quivering lips to the throne of Right
  A faint low cry of "Mercy!" passed.

Justice and Mercy! Hear them both!
  Bondman and master both are here;
Each asketh that which he needeth most. —
  Now pass from my soul, thou dream of fear!

LINES ON CHANNING.

WHEN sinks the sun, shall we forget
That but to us his beams are set?
When holy spirits pass away,
Shall we but weep o'er feeble clay?

With aspirations like thine own,
Pure being, whom we dare not mourn,
O, let us mark, where dwells "no night,"
A new-born, active, burning light.

Shine on for ever, tranquil star!
Though in far heaven thy glories are,
Their solemn beams shall from this hour
Fall on our souls with added power.

Each thrilling cadence, each mild word
Of love or wisdom we have heard,
From gifted lips now still and cold,
Shall be imbued with power untold.

Go, Christian sage! Death now hath wrought
On pages glowing with thy thought;
Death, who hath calmed all pain, hath sealed
Thy power on earth, — and heaven revealed.

THE BABY'S COMPLAINT.

O MOTHER, dear mother, no wonder I cry,
More wonder by far that your baby don't die;
No matter what ails me, no matter who 's here,
No matter how hungry the " poor little dear! "
No matter if full, or all out of breath,
She trots me, and trots me, and trots me to death!

I love my dear nurse, but I dread that great knee;
I like all her talk, but woe unto me!
She can't be contented with talking so pretty,
And washing, and dressing, and doing her duty;
All that 's very well, — I can bear soap and water, —
But, mother, she is an unmerciful trotter!

Pretty ladies, I want just to look at your faces;
Pretty lamp, pretty fire, let me see how it blazes;
How can I, my head going bibbity bob?
And she trots me the harder, the harder I sob;

O mother, do stop her! I 'm inwardly sore,
I hiccup and cry, and she trots me the more, —
And talks about "wind," when 't is she makes me ache;
Wish 't would blow her away, for poor baby's sake!

Thank goodness, I 'm still; O, blessed be quiet!
I 'm glad my dear mother is willing to try it;
Of foolish old customs my mother 's no lover,
And the wisdom of this she can never discover.
I 'll rest me awhile, and just look about,
And laugh up at Sally, who peeps in and out,
And pick up some notions as soon as I can,
To fill my small noddle before I 'm a man.

O dear, is that she? Is she coming so soon?
She 's bringing my dinner with teacup and spoon;
She 'll hold me with one hand, in t' other the cup,
And as fast as it 's down, she 'll just shake it up;
And thumpity thump, with the greatest delight,
Her heel it is going from morning till night;
All over the house you may hear it, I 'm sure,
Trot, trotting! Just think what I 'm doomed to endure!

JOANNA OF NAPLES.

TO

HER FATHER

THE FOLLOWING PAGES

ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.

INTRODUCTION.

THE author of the following tale deems some apology due to the public, for offering them so slight a production, founded on a subject so fertile in materials; for Joanna the First of Naples, the high-minded and ill-fated prototype of Mary Stuart, bloomed and perished at an epoch in the world's history which can scarcely be exceeded in interest by any given period. It presents a theme worthy of the departed Scott, or the living James.

Some years since, the writer perused Mrs. Jameson's *Lives of The Female Sovereigns* with great pleasure, and the impression was a lasting one, — particularly so with regard to the biography of Joanna. She was led by it to examine all the records of that celebrated queen to which she had access. When afterwards deprived of her custom-

ary occupations, for two or three years, by partial blindness, one of her chief resources against the weariness of forced idleness was in exercises of the memory and invention. She sometimes entertained herself with weaving fictions and planning little works, destined never to come forth from the chambers of her brain; and, amid the visionary processions which moved through her darkened apartment, many a time did the majestic figure of the Neapolitan queen sweep sadly by, the heroine of the unwritten romance. As a memorial of those hours, when the faculties mercifully bestowed on every human mind asserted their power to charm away physical evil, she has, the last summer, committed some of their fruits to paper, and the task has again beguiled a few weeks of ill health. Want of eyesight has prevented her indulging in researches that might have graced her pages with antiquarian lore; but she trusts she has avoided any serious anachronisms. Her narrative is not a work of pure fiction, as most of the leading characters and principal events are historical; and she has endeavoured

to take no unwarrantable liberties with facts, as recorded by writers who believed Joanna innocent of the crimes charged upon her by her enemies.

For a time the author contemplated *attempting* a tragedy on the subject which is now presented in a less ambitious form; but a strong consciousness of the high nature of the undertaking, and of the difficulties to be encountered by any one who proposes to conform to the rules laid down by the established canons of criticism, deterred her from so hazardous an enterprise.

In the following tale, she has remembered a wish often expressed in her hearing by judicious mothers; she has endeavoured to discard the machinery usually employed in works of fiction, and to bring strong passions and affections into play, without the coöperation of that on which the main interest of a romantic story commonly depends. She respectfully waits the decision of the public as to the degree of interest excited for a heroine, whose fears and trials are not interwoven with a love-tale. Her little work is published in the hope, that, if

it win the approbation of her young readers, they may be lured by it to the fountains of history, ever pouring forth bright streams of pleasure and instruction. As the current comes gliding down from the urns of dim antiquity, it brings us awful truths, that deserve contemplation; — the insufficiency of human greatness; the dangers of a blinding prosperity; the terrible retribution, which so often overtakes guilt, even on this side of the grave.

JOANNA OF NAPLES.

CHAPTER I.

It was in the month of June, in the year 1382, on a day of unusual heat, that a solitary female walked her apartment in the fairest palace of Naples, while the whole city lay hushed under the spell of the calm, sultry noon. The siesta was upon the eyelids of the noble in his hall, and the lazarone stretched his indolent limbs in the shade of some lofty wall; while the very waves of the lovely bay came murmuring sleepily as it were to the beach, where not a living thing stirred along the wide sweep. The sails of the fishing-boats hung down motionless; the atmosphere seemed to quiver above the roofs of the city; the cone of Vesuvius, from whose apparently extinguished fires no smoke had risen for nearly two centuries, rose clearly defined in the pure realms of upper air, and the sun, from a cloudless sky, poured down a flood of yellow beams that seemed to oppress man, beast, and inanimate nature with their fervor.

But there was one, in that vast and populous city, who appeared unconscious of the hour and its influences. She was pacing a superb room in a palace which overlooked the bay, and held crushed in her hand a loose packet, while meditation, of a deep and anxious character, sat in her downcast eyes. Her tall figure was worthy of the countenance where still lingered an exquisite loveliness, though youth had long since fled; yet the touch of time had scarcely woven a single thread of silver among the dark curls which would have fallen in profusion about her face, had they not been confined, with a propriety becoming her years, by a circlet of gold round her regal brows, from which a long veil depended over her graceful form and purple velvet robe. Her pale Italian complexion suited the Roman cast of her features. The sadness of her countenance was not that of a single hour's sorrow; a settled thoughtfulness was in her fine, but deep-sunken eyes, which marked her for one who had long been familiar with the lessons of affliction; — yet this was a queen! In one of the fairest realms on earth she had been the loveliest and loftiest! the theme of poets in that land of song, and fitted by the graces of her mind, as well as person, to wake and claim admiration from the most gifted intellects of the age. It was the beautiful but unfortunate Joanna, queen of Naples, whose existence had opened with every prospect of earthly felicity which the heart of woman could crave, and who had been early taught that rank, beauty, wealth,

and talent cannot ward off the fitting trials of this life from a helpless human being; powerful over a few fellow-creatures it might be, — powerless in the hands of the unseen Ruler of people and potentates. The meridian of her eventful life was past, and there was little promise that its wane would afford that calm which a wearied spirit craves, when the conflicts of youth have been fierce and many.

She sat down and looked between the massy columns upon the prospect; — it was beautiful, but lifeless. The desolate feeling in her own heart gave a meaning to the universal repose which did not belong to it; and she felt as if the unseen multitude who slumbered under that broad sky were to wake no more. She cast her eyes to the mountain, and remembering that it had been more than once the cause of sudden destruction to thousands, she shuddered. "But no!" she thought; "the evils I have reason to dread for my people are of another stamp; and these gloomy forebodings rise not from the past dealings of God, but from what I know is in man, — cruel, treacherous man." She turned over the leaves of the packet in her hand, conned passages with a troubled air, and, passing her hand over her temples as if they ached, she sunk into a long, unbroken reverie, until the hottest hours were past. A soft breeze at last began to stir among the orange-trees below the balcony; the sounds of voices rose once more on the air, and a few figures appeared moving along the beach. Still she sat, her head leaning against a mar-

ble column, her eyes closed, and her fine features occasionally disturbed by the current of busy and anxious thought within. A faint tinge, a reflection from the crimson drapery that hung between her and the broad glare of day, was thrown upon her cheek, and the unconscious grace of her attitude would have riveted a sculptor's eye. The apartment was separated from two other chambers by doors, now thrown open for the sake of coolness, yet hung with rich curtains, waving in the rising breeze. A sound issued thence which roused the dejected queen; the unsteady steps and suppressed laughter of children came from the anteroom, and presently the curtain was put aside, and two lovely faces peeped archly through. Sorrow fled instantly from the countenance of Joanna, and she extended her arms to receive the little intruders, who, finding themselves perceived, came laughing and bounding towards her. One was a noble, animated boy, about five years of age; the other, a little girl, scarce three; and both for an instant clung round the neck of her who gave them so loving a welcome. The boy, however, soon betook himself to his sports, coursing about the apartment on the broken spear which he called his war-horse; while the little girl, with the gentler habits of her sex, sat contentedly on the lap of the queen, playing with the rich ornaments of her dress, ever and anon shaking back the curls from her cheeks, and looking up with her inquiring eyes, as she awaited answers to her innumerable questions. She had

already drawn the pearl bracelets from the royal wrists they adorned, and fastened one about her own brows, while the other encircled her throat, and was in the act of transferring the sparkling rings of the queen to her own tiny fingers, laughing merrily at their disproportionate size, when the drapery was again put aside from the door, and a young and beautiful female entered. A glance would have decided her to be the mother of the children, though her fairy-like proportions and delicacy of complexion gave her the appearance of extreme youth. She was, in fact, scarce two-and-twenty, but had been six years the wife of Charles of Durazzo.

When Joanna found herself bereaved of her beloved sister, she had lavished upon her daughter the deepest affections of her nature; and to Charles, the son of her enemy, as well as to Margaret, the daughter of her sister Maria, she had manifested the tenderness of a mother. Her palace had been their abode after the decease of their parents, and in their early union she had rejoiced. There the young Margaret had found a home from her very birth; there she was wedded; there had her two children been born; and there she was now bringing them up peacefully, under the protection of the august Joanna; while her husband, Charles of Durazzo, bore arms in the less genial regions of Germany. Never was there a nobler instance of magnanimity than Joanna's, in adopting the son of that prince of Durazzo who had so often disquieted her reign; and her ex-

treme fondness for the youth seemed justified by his bravery and talents. The young Margaret delighted in pouring forth the idolizing feelings of her heart to one who had acted the part of a mother to both herself and her husband. In the affection of her niece, Joanna had found consolation during the absence of her adopted son; and her childless desolation had been cheered by the caresses and sprightliness of their offspring. "Look," said she to the approaching mother, "your little Joanna would steal my sceptre, if it were within her reach, without waiting for the day when it may be hers!" There was something sad in her tone, which was inconsistent with the sportive manner in which she held up the smiling face of the little girl, to show the pearl bandeau on her forehead; but there was no reply to her remark. Absorbed in the children, it was some moments before she observed the unwonted abstraction of their mother. The boy was the first who drew her attention to it; as he came making a sportive pass at them with his mimic weapon, she saw a sudden change pass over his bright face, and he stood gazing at his mother with a look of anxious wonder. Joanna turned, and observed that tears were trickling down the cheeks where smiles were wont to play. She rose in surprise and summoned the attendants to take away the children. They yielded reluctantly, and the miniature queen resisted, as they took the borrowed pearls from her and led her away, turning back her face over her fair round shoulder with many a sob.

When they were alone, Joanna endeavoured to draw from her pale and trembling niece the cause of her agitation; but in vain. She strove to speak, but seemed half choked with emotion; and it was not until she had thrown herself on the neck of her adopted mother, and poured forth a flood of tears, that she uttered the words, "My husband!"

"What news from him?" exclaimed Joanna; "you heard from him this day, by the same courier who brought despatches to me? Is he not well? I have not heard otherwise, — at least not of his bodily health."

"He is well," said Margaret, "but, O my mother, my dear mother! he bids me ——" She could not finish the sentence, and Joanna waited in dismay.

"Margaret," said she at last, "can it be possible that I divine what you would say? Can it be that he orders you to leave me?"

Margaret faintly murmured, "It is so," and sunk weeping on the cushions.

The blood rushed over the face of Joanna, and forsook it again. Becoming deadly pale, she whispered to herself, "Proof strong and terrible!" and walked to the farthest end of the apartment, throwing aside the drapery from the window, and leaning her head against a column, as if in hopes that the fresh air might revive her. The brief illness passed away; but her lips were still white, when she returned with a steady step, and taking the hands of Margaret in her own, she said quietly, "Margaret of

Durazzo, you shall go; — with all the honors of your rank you shall pass from my palace, from my kingdom, from my protection, to that of your husband."

"O my mother!" again exclaimed the princess, "do you part with me so lightly?"

"So lightly!" repeated Joanna, pressing her hand to her forehead; "God only knows whether my heart will break or not; but think you I am one to mock a husband's claim? Have I taught you to love Charles from your cradle, — have I given my benediction on your nuptials, — have I been to him in the place of his departed mother, seeking in all things to gratify each wish of his heart, — and think you I could rob him of you at last? Margaret, were I to lie down this night on yonder couch, and know that I should never rise from it more, I would first speed you on your perilous journey. Your children, too, doth he summon them?"

"He bids me sue for their company also; and why I weep so bitterly I know not, since he asks but a visit, — a short visit, — and promises to escort us to dear Naples again in a few weeks. But, mother! I have never, never left you for a single day, and though it be to meet my adored husband ——"

Joanna interrupted her: — "The children, too! I see it all! The involuntary hostages must be withdrawn. Margaret, look me in the face!"

Astonished at the almost stern demand, Margaret looked up; Joanna fixed a penetrating gaze on her

sweet, innocent countenance, and then asked, — "Do you not know *why* your husband thus summons you to the rude camp?"

"Nay, mother, is it strange that he should wish to see me? How long is it since he has beheld wife or child?"

Joanna contemplated her ingenuous features a moment longer, and then murmuring, "Guileless as the morning dew!" turned away with a deep sigh. "No, Margaret; it is not strange that he should wish to see you. Go to him, my child; your *visit* may not be so brief as you imagine; but be our separation long or short, my blessing will be with you. And tell him I spoke no word to detain you, uttered no murmur, breathed no doubt." The last words died away in a whisper, and Joanna turned to leave the kneeling princess with an air of abstraction; but suddenly recollecting herself, asked, "Does he name a day for your departure?"

"To-morrow," faintly articulated Margaret; "a troop of horse for my escort are without the city."

Joanna's cheek was again flushed, as she exclaimed, "So soon! Are the hours so precious to him! Then the hurricane will come on apace! Margaret," she added, more calmly, "set forth in the cool hour of morn, but do not seek to bid me farewell; do not send the children to me." Her lip quivered as she spoke. "I am not quite well, methinks; and I will not sadden their gay setting forth upon their travels with my tears. I have forebodings that it may be

long ere we meet again, and in solitary meditation only can I combat the weaknesses of my nature."

"Not well!" exclaimed Margaret; "nay, mother, if you are not well, how can I leave you? Charles would not ask it, — would not expect it. Your color comes and goes strangely; indeed you are not well, and do you imagine I can depart to-morrow?"

Her plaintive question brought the tears at last into the burning eyes of Joanna. She pressed her lips on the forehead of the affectionate being, and said gently, "You must go, my child; it is a matter of duty, — of state policy; and my honor as a queen bids me not impede you. Alas! why should she who bears the crown on her brow wear the heart of a woman to ache with a woman's sorrows? Go, Margaret; I am not ill, save in the spirit, and that you have often seen weighed down with many cares. Leave me, but do not, do not forget me! do not cease to love me! And Margaret, — hush! let not the walls hear me, — if evil counsellors come between me and the children of my adoption, if they seek to steal away thy husband's love for me, if they bid him wrong me, insult me, rob me, bring him back, dearest Margaret! Win him again to this maternal embrace! Speak to him like an angel of peace, and save me from the wretchedness of despising one I have idolized!"

Overcome by her emotions, Joanna remained hardly conscious how far she had been hurried, with her hands grasping firmly those of her kneeling niece,

and her head bowed down upon her breast. Margaret continued a moment speechless, with an air of utter amazement and horror, scarcely believing she had heard aright, and then, springing to her feet, she exclaimed, "Mother! what is it you say? what is it you fear? whom do you doubt? Is it of my husband you speak? of Charles? Have the slanderers dared touch his unspotted fame? You do not, — you cannot believe one word uttered against his love and truth."

"Margaret," said Joanna, "there are things which may not be lightly believed; I *believe* nothing; but strange rumors have reached me. They tell me the tempter has been with him; he is but a man, my child, and an ambitious one, — and I have lived to see the surest footed fall, in slippery paths."

"O mother!" said Margaret, "bitter must have been the experiences which have poisoned so noble a mind as yours with suspicion. I will go to my husband; would I were with him now! for I know that a truer heart never beat. I will bring him to your very feet to deny the calumny with his own lips. He false, who has worshipped you from his infancy, and would have poured out his blood a thousand times in defence of your rights! O, none but a wife can know the heart of her husband! and sure am I that Charles loves, venerates, and adores you, as I do. Would it were to-morrow!"

"Would that another and another morrow were past, — until the last!" said Joanna; "for the burden

of life grows heavier each day, and I fear I shall become weary of it. I meant not to disturb your peace prematurely, my child; I meant to have locked up miserable fears in my own heart, until their fulfilment came; but to distrust the affection of Charles has given me pangs that would not bear concealment. Leave me, Margaret. To part with you at all is woe enough; to part with you thus is a trial, under which I must seek consolation at the foot of the altar. There, at least, I have found peace in the saddest hours I have ever known; and there I trust I shall yet find it, whatever darker doom may be in store for me."

As she spoke, she drew a small golden crucifix from her girdle, and pressing it to her lips, as she raised her swimming eyes to heaven, she placed one hand on the head of Margaret; and whispering a short Latin invocation to the protecting Virgin, she turned, and, walking slowly to the farther end of the room, disappeared through a passage leading to a chapel. Margaret, half blinded by her tears, gazed on her majestic figure till it vanished, and then, with a bewildered air and heavy heart, retired to her own apartment, to order hasty preparations for her departure.

CHAPTER II.

The morning star was yet glittering over Vesuvius, when the blast of the horn was heard in the square before the palace, and knights, gorgeously arrayed, rode in from all quarters. Joanna had given orders that her niece should be attended from the city by a splendid *cortége;* and the proudest barons of her court came forth in obedience to the behest of their queen, the younger not unwilling to prance in the train of so beautiful a princess.

Margaret roused herself from her broken slumbers to a sad consciousness that the day of her first departure from *home* had arrived; an event which can be devoid of interest only to the unthinking or cold-hearted, and Margaret was neither. The deeper causes of uneasiness, arising from her parting conversation with the queen, were already floating from her mind; for she had persuaded herself that all would soon be well. She had but to see her husband, to converse with him, and all would be explained; they would return together to the home of their youth, and the heart of their adopted mother would be eased, so that with the full ardor of youthful hope and confidence she prepared to set forth. A flush of indignation, indeed, mantled her cheek, as she remembered how base had been the insinuations conveyed to Joanna; but her hope of an immediate

and proud confutation was triumphant above all other emotions; and with a step as elastic as her own spirits, she descended to the court-yard, at the head of her maiden train. The great gates were thrown open, and she saw the square filled with plumed heads, glittering arms, and waving banners. Her little son, whom she led, broke from her and clapped his hands exultingly at the spectacle, while the blasts of the trumpets and shouts of the throng gave token of the popularity which attended Joanna and her family.

Accustomed to the saddle, which had already assumed the shape used by fair equestrians in modern days, Margaret had preferred commencing her journey on the palfrey she rode on hawking expeditions; and the milk-white animal, gentle as he was beautiful, stood at the foot of a flight of marble steps, sweeping the ground with his flowing tail and rich caparisons. As she presented herself to the public gaze, glowing with youth and beauty, the first red beams of the rising sun fell upon her, and shrinking at the unexpected acclamations of the people, she looked like a young Aurora, retiring as the god of day advanced. Even as she descended the steps, conducted by a courtly knight, her reverted glances scanned the front of the palace, for she hoped to meet with one kind, parting smile from her whose presence she had been forbidden to seek; but it was in vain; and while she mounted and rode forth into the square, courteously bowing her head and lav-

ishing her grateful smiles on the populace, she felt that her eyes were filling with tears of disappointment.

She did not, however, pass forth unmarked by one whose heart yearned after her as she went. The royal canopy had that night sheltered a royal watcher, not, alas! for the first time in her eventful life. With the first gray of morning, Joanna had again resorted to the chapel, and there she strove to shut out the confused sounds which indicated the early and unusual stir in that part of the city, where quiet generally prevailed at this hour, notwithstanding the restless habits of the Neapolitans. The distant trampling and neighing of steeds, the shrill blasts of the trumpets, and the bustle in a remote wing of the palace occupied by Margaret, occasionally broke on her devotions; but at last that most peculiar sound, unlike all others, and most familiar to royal ears, rose upon the air, and came with a full swell along the arched roof of the chapel, — the power of innumerable human voices, united in one mighty and prolonged shout. She dropped her rosary; — she knew that Margaret was leaving the safe and happy home of her youth. Again it came surging through the lonely chapel; and the imperious promptings of affection could no longer be resisted. She left the chapel and hastened to a gallery which overlooked the square; where, through a latticed window, she might gaze unobserved on the splendors beneath. Little attraction had the pomp of her nobility for her

eyes, riveted on one object alone. She saw the princess in the centre of the glittering throng, managing her palfrey with exquisite grace, while her long, white plumes, lifted up by the morning breeze, danced gayly over her face, and gave to view its bright and bewitching smiles. For a single instant a pang shot through the heart of Joanna. "He would make her their queen, even now," thought she, "and cannot wait till the faded and forgotten Joanna rests in her grave!" She covered her face to shut out the spectacle; she struggled inwardly, and the better feelings of her noble nature rose with a momentary prayer, for she had learned that the worst enemies of our peace are not without, but within us, and to triumph there is to triumph everywhere.

When she looked again, the litters containing the children and their attendants were passing, but the form of Margaret was still plainly visible; and she now saw her face sadly reverted. The princess was about to vanish from the square, when, by a sudden impulse of feeling, she checked her steed, — reined him about; the knights around her drew up, — the procession halted; and a solemn and respectful silence pervaded the whole throng, while the departing princess took one last, mournful survey of the palace. Joanna's hand was upon the lattice; her emotion was almost irrepressible. She longed to rush upon the balcony, and, in the presence of her assembled people, bestow another parting benediction on the lovely and

innocent creature whom she thought never to behold again. But while striving with the impulse, she saw one of the barons respectfully take the bridle of Margaret's horse, and, turning about, lead him round the angle of the street they were about to enter; while the princess, drooping and manifestly in tears, drew her veil over her face, and in that sad guise disappeared from the straining gaze of Joanna. No acclamations now rose on the air; the stillness of universal sympathy pervaded the multitude; and Joanna stood mechanically watching the train as the knights rode two and two out of the square, until the last had turned the corner. The people crowded silently after, till not a human being was left in the vast space, save the lame beggars that lay in the porticos. The tramp of innumerable feet died away in the distance, and all was quiet and solitary; not even the footstep of an attendant was to be heard wandering through the palace; and for the first time in her life, checkered as it had been with many woes, Joanna's heart died within her, with a lonely and forsaken feeling. "They are gone, — they are gone!" is the idea that takes complete possession of the mind, when the young, gay, and beloved pass from our abodes. To Joanna, full as her mind was of the gloomiest anticipations, the hush which prevailed in the palace, after the bustle of departure, had in it something awful and deathlike; it seemed to her as if a funeral procession had left her gates.

In the mean time Margaret passed on through the

fairy regions which encircle the city of Naples; and upon her was not lost the fresh matin beauty of its matchless scenery. Her eye caught with pleasure the innumerable fishing-boats, gliding almost imperceptibly over the mirror-like surface, scarce rocking as they went, and distinctly reflected, with their snowy sails, in the water. The faint night-mist, which yet lingered at a distance, half veiled the islands, which rose looming from it like remote mountains; and over Posilipo hung the thin, cloud-like, waning moon, still visible, though the sun was considerably above the horizon. Absorbed in meditations, half sad and half pleasing, she gave no encouragement to conversation; but after they left these familiar objects behind them, and wound through vineyards and orange groves, she felt one pang more in exchanging the gay escort from the court of Joanna for that of her husband's rude and warlike band. With all graceful courtesy she bade adieu to the proud nobles, as one by one they passed before her, bending to the saddlebow with their helmeted heads; and as she saw them put spurs to their steeds, fall again into ranks, and sweep back along the road to Naples, soon lost among the foliage, she turned a doubtful glance on the warriors that surrounded her. It was a detachment of his most tried and faithful cavalry whom Charles had sent to bring her into the distant plains of Lombardy, whither he had promised to descend and meet her; and the perfect training of their steeds, the war-worn condition of their

armour, and their scarred visages, bore testimony that they had been engaged in no holiday service. Margaret resigned herself to their protection, with a feeling of confidence and security, inspired by the bare idea that they were her husband's soldiers, — that the familiar banner which flaunted above them was his, — that they had fought by his side, and were by him trusted with a most precious charge.

The day passed away without event, excepting that, as they approached Aversa, her attention was fixed on the gray walls of a convent, rising above the trees, on the brow of a wooded hill. There was nothing peculiar in the object, so similar to many others along their winding way; but she saw an elderly knight of the party pointing it out to his companion with a frowning brow; and as they rode closer together, and fell into a low, eager conversation, still occasionally looking towards it with austere countenances, she felt assured that it had been the scene of some dreadful calamity, — perhaps crime. Curiosity at last prompted her to approach them to inquire its history; when the name of "Andrea" fell on her ear. Horror-struck at the sound, she drew back in silence; and shuddered as she again fixed her eyes on those gloomy walls, within whose circuit that prince — the youthful husband of Joanna in her early and happy days — had been so foully and mysteriously murdered. She knew that, at the time, dark surmises had touched the character of Joanna; but she believed that her triumphant acquittal

had promptly cleared her fame, and that her spotless course had since lived down all suspicion. She knew not that the delicate texture of a woman's reputation retains a tinge for ever, where calumny has once fallen; she knew not the existence of those uncharitable spirits, whose delight it is to believe the worst, — who cannot forget that evil was once spoken, and will not suffer oblivion to gather round the cruel and idle slanders of bygone days. She little dreamed that the character of the pure and lofty Joanna, the kinswoman whose virtues she loved and reverenced so deeply, was to be handed down to posterity, a problem for the discussion of the antiquarian, a disputed point among the searchers into the dark things of history; and that thousands would live and die under the impression, that, early ripe in guilt as in talents, she had stained her soul, as she trod life's threshold, with a murder of peculiar atrocity.*

We will not trace the route of Margaret as she pressed on to a reunion with her husband. Impa-

* "Public rumors, in the absence of notorious proof, imputed the guilt of this mysterious assassination to Joanna. Whether historians are authorized to assume her participation in it so confidently as they have generally done, may perhaps be doubted; though I cannot venture positively to rescind their sentence." — "The name of Joan of Naples has suffered by the lax repetition of calumnies. Whatever share she may have had in her husband's death, and certainly under circumstances of extenuation, her subsequent life was not open to any flagrant reproach; the charge of dissolute manners, so frequently made, *is not warranted by any specific proof or contemporary testimony.*" — HALLAM's *Middle Ages*, Part II. Ch. iii.

tient of delay, she could not be detained by invitations or proffered civilities from the court of Rome. Detesting the character of the tyrannical Urban, of whom Gibbon remarks that "he could walk in his garden reading his breviary, while hearing the cries of six cardinals upon the rack in an adjacent room," she shrunk from the Vatican as from the den of a wild beast, and pursued her northward journey with as much celerity as possible for a train of females and children unaccustomed to fatigue. At one spot the Baron di Castiglione pointed out two routes, one of which led winding through plains and valleys, while the other, though far more rough and wild, would conduct them more speedily through mountain defiles to their journey's end, and on this she decided.

It was towards the close of a lovely summer's day that the little troop descended, along a thickly wooded mountain road, into a rocky pass. The cliffs rose high above them on each side, garlanded in spots with rough grass and tangled weeds, while here and there the larch and the pine sprang from the clefts, and partially clothed the gray, eternal rocks with their sombre verdure. On the right, a torrent came dashing from the recesses of the hills, and, with a perpendicular fall of some twenty feet, formed a deep basin, from which it rippled quietly away down the valley. Round the basin was spread a carpet of the greenest and softest herbage; and its waters lay dark under the shadow of an enormous oak that stood on its

brink. The gnarled roots of this monarch of the dell rose above the turf, or, stretching away under the still water, looked like sleeping serpents. The spot had an aspect so cool and tranquil, that Margaret was glad when she saw the Baron give a signal for halting; and though she had preferred riding on horseback since noon, that she might enjoy scenery to her so new and picturesque, yet, weary and heated as she was, it was a luxury to spring from the saddle upon the fresh turf; and, throwing back her veil, she inhaled the bracing mountain air with delight. As she seated herself on one of the huge twisted roots by the basin, the children came rejoicing to her side; her ladies gathered almost under the spray of the torrent to enjoy its freshness; the warriors dispersed themselves in groups among the clefts of the rocks, and their steeds came panting to drink of the pool, or strayed, quietly grazing, down the little valley. The Baron di Castiglione, having despatched a single horseman in advance, removed the helmet from his gray locks, and summoning his favorite, the spirited boy, to his knee, established himself on a large fragment of rock, which had fallen from the cliffs above, whence he could command a view of the lower entrance into the pass. In a short time, fatigue hushed every one into silence, and the tranquil genius of the place seemed to have resumed his sway. The little Margaret laid her curly locks upon her mother's lap, and, soothed by the continuous dashing of the waterfall, sunk into a profound slumber; and

the wild goats came to the edges of the rocks, looked down at the peaceable intruders a few moments in surprise, and then bounded away to their heights.

As Margaret sat enjoying it all with the keen zest of one who, having a true taste for nature, had escaped to her wildest haunts from the irksome monotony of a palace, she gazed upwards to the deep blue sky, of which so narrow a space was visible, with an unwonted admiration of its purity; when suddenly, from the summit of the loftiest precipice in view, a large, stately bird rose upon the wing, and soared away with many a majestic sweep. She needed no one to tell her it was the mountain eagle; she almost fancied she heard the rush of his mighty wings, as he sprang forth on the breeze, and following him with an intense gaze, as he diminished to a seeming speck and vanished in the realms of upper air, she was unconscious of a commotion among the recumbent knights about her. When her strained eyes again rested on earth, she perceived that most of them had risen, and were looking towards the lower part of the defile. The Baron di Castiglione, too, had turned in the same direction, with the air of one listening intently; and presently a sound, as of horsemen ascending the rocky pass at full speed, came upon her ear. The idea of an attack from banditti flashed across her mind, as she cast a hurried glance about the wild, secluded spot; and rising, she clasped her little girl to her bosom, and, advancing to the side of the Baron, stood in the centre of

the grass plat. In another moment, two knights, mounted on black steeds, came rapidly into the pass, and on seeing the group before them, reined up suddenly and respectfully, remaining motionless in their saddles. The next instant a third knight came dashing between them, on a superb white charger, glittering, like his master, with steel and gold; and as the princely figure galloped almost to her side, threw himself to the ground, and raised the vizor from his noble countenance, Margaret recognized her long-absent husband, Charles of Durazzo!

When the first joy of meeting his wife and children was over, Charles turned to the Baron, and exclaimed hastily, "You have surprised me much. When your messenger came but now to tell me the princess was here, I could scarce credit my ears. Why tarried you not in Rome?"

"I had no such orders."

"What! have you met no couriers? I sent two, with injunctions that, if you had left the city, you should forthwith return thither, and await me."

"They have missed us, then," said the Baron;—"it was the princess's pleasure to take the shorter road through the hills, and they, no doubt, expected to meet us in the plains."

"It is unfortunate," said the prince; "I did not mean to welcome my wife to my canvas walls and rough camp fare, when Rome has so many stately palaces whose gilded doors would fly open to receive her."

"I should better love the humblest tent under your banner," whispered Margaret, "than the proudest palace in that city."

Charles smiled upon her kindly, and laying his gauntleted hand on the head of his boy, who, lost in admiration, stood gazing up in his face, he added, "And here, too, is one who will love a soldier's straw pallet better than the silken pillows of Naples! To the camp, then, Baron; we will give these fair ladies as little cause as may be to repent their long journey, and they shall look upon a sight that may repay no small fatigue. They shall behold an army that a prince may be proud to lead."

It was now by the side of her husband, listening to his cheerful voice, and feeling that his guardian hand was on her palfrey's bridle, that Margaret resumed her route, forgetting in the happiness of the moment that such a thing as doubt, fear, or sorrow existed. The Baron di Castiglione rode near them, and to him Charles addressed much of his conversation, respecting the state of his troops, and the Venetian wars. In less than half an hour they emerged from the rocks and trees of the mountainous country, and as they issued from the forest upon the brow of a hill, far as the eye could reach extended a noble spectacle indeed. The champaign below them was green as an emerald, with many rills winding and glittering through the meadows; and everywhere were scattered the white tents of an extended camp. By the brook-sides, in the fields, among the groves,

the long lines stretched away to the right and left, distinctly visible by the light that yet came from the glowing west, where the sun had just sunk below the horizon. The shadows of twilight had indeed begun to gather over some of the deepest dells; but on their right, along the whole eastern horizon, glimmered a range of cloud-like forms, the summits of snow-topped mountains, gilded by the beams of that sun which to the lower country had already set. Almost breathless with admiration, Margaret uttered an exclamation, which induced her husband to pause indulgently a few moments that she might enjoy the scene; and she could scarcely help sighing, when, as they trotted slowly down the green slope, the groves that soon overshadowed them shut the whole from her view.

New cause of wonder, however, arose as they entered the city of tents, where the cleanliness, order, and stillness that prevailed spoke well for the discipline of Charles's boasted army. Received with military honors at the lines, the little cavalcade was conducted through a long, wide street of tents, at the termination of which an illuminated pavilion glimmered through the closing dusk; and here the weary Margaret dismounted. Every possible arrangement had been hastily made for her comfort; she sunk exhausted upon the soft cushions, piled up for her couch; but though refreshments were brought her, the fever, induced by fatigue and over-excitement, began to burn on her cheeks and throb in her pulse.

Charles, in alarm, summoned the most experienced of her attendants, who prescribed rest and quiet; he passed softly from the pavilion, gave orders for profound stillness throughout the camp, and retired to an humbler tent in her vicinity. Even the sentinel at her door remained motionless at his post, lest his footfall should disturb her slumbers; and long ere the usual hour, a midnight hush was upon those thousands of living and active human beings.

CHAPTER III.

Unwonted noises roused the princess early the next morning, but she awoke completely refreshed and restored; and for a while, ere she summoned her attendants, lay endeavouring to collect her scattered ideas. As the events of the preceding day floated through her mind, a painful thought suddenly struck her; and the more she reflected upon it, the more she wondered that, in spite of her fatigue and indisposition, it had not occurred to her before. Not a word of inquiry respecting the queen had escaped the lips of Charles! He had shown no solicitude to hear of her health or her occupations; he had not mentioned her nor alluded to her. In vain Margaret strove to bring to mind some hasty question, some one word of loving recollection; in vain she tried to extenuate

such seeming want of interest in his noble benefactress, — to fancy that the joy of meeting his wife and children, or that military cares, might have occasioned a brief forgetfulness of what was nevertheless near his heart. Uncomfortable and perturbed, she rose betimes, and when the duties of her toilette were completed, sent a page to answer the inquiries which a messenger from Charles had already addressed to her women. The prince was then occupied among his officers; but she soon heard his jocund voice at the door of her tent, and, dismissing her attendants, she hastened to meet him. He was already armed and prepared for the saddle; and joyfully observing the restored bloom on her cheek, he drew her forth, saying, — "Come out, my wife, and look at this stirring sight."

It was so, indeed. The knoll on which her pavilion stood commanded a view of a large portion of the camp; but wherever she turned her eyes, it dropped at once from her sight, and in an instant the whole aspect of the field was changed, as if by magic. In the distance, towards the south, the arms of the departing troops were seen gleaming through the trees as they ascended the hills which bounded the plain; and a large body of cavalry stood waiting at a short distance. As she came forth from the pavilion, the war-horse of Charles was led up by two grooms, who could with difficulty restrain the ardor of the noble animal, tossing his head and rearing under their grasp. His eye glanced fire as he heard the

well-known voice of his accustomed rider in the battle-field; but Charles hastily bade the men take him away. "I shall not ride Cæsar upon the march," said he; "I shall want him fresh for service. Bring me the Black Prince."

"That was the name our mother taught you to reverence. The brave English warrior befriended James of Minorca, and she never forgot it," said Margaret, scarce daring to look in her husband's face as she ventured this remark.

He winced, however, for she felt a sudden slight motion of the arm on which she leaned; but, without apparently having heard her, he exclaimed, — "You will call me no true knight, Margaret, for deserting you as soon as you place yourself under my protection; but there are leaders among my troops, with whom it is necessary I should hold constant colloquy, and business at present demands every moment of my waking time. It will be better, therefore, that the good Baron di Castiglione resume his office, and guide you back through the hills again to Rome, while I march to the same point along the plains." Observing the tears gathering in Margaret's eyes, he added, — "I must needs head my troops, dearest; and it will be safer, pleasanter, and more fitting, that you travel under a selected escort, than in company with my rough soldiery. In Rome we shall meet."

"It is hard to part again so soon," said Margaret, "but that is not all that disappoints me. I had something to say to you, Charles."

"And can you not say it briefly? or is not that a woman's talent?" asked the prince gayly; "my body-guard shall wait, then, a little for me; we will dash the faster through the dew, and overtake yon creeping infantry in marvellous short space. What little harangue have you prepared that makes you so pale? Surely there can be no boon which *you* dare not ask of me."

"I have no boon to ask," said Margaret, trembling; "but do you know, Charles, it seems to me strange that you have not inquired after the queen!"

The prince colored to the temples. "Have I not indeed? Is it possible?" said he. "But you know I have scarce had time; you were ill last night; in fact, we have hardly met as yet. She is well, is she not?"

"Ah, Charles," exclaimed Margaret, "our mother would not thus have asked tidings of you! It is of you she thinks night and day; her absent husband, dearly as she loves him, is not more constantly present to her thoughts, and the color comes proudly to her cheek when she hears you praised, as if you had indeed drawn your very existence from her! Could you but have seen her when the false rumor came that you were slain in battle! She did not strive to soothe my anguish, for she shared it. Pale as marble, speechless as a statue, she sat hours by my couch, with the tears trickling down her cheeks, save when she laid her head on my pillow to mingle her groans and sobs with mine. O my husband!

to think an orphan boy like you should have found maternal tenderness so fond, and in so noble a being!"

Charles fixed his eyes on the ground; but Margaret waited in vain for a word. "How often I have longed to tell you of her devotion to your children, — how she trains up your son to look upon his father as the model of all things heroic and excellent, — how she bids him be as brave in the field, as wise in the council-chamber, as generous to the unfortunate, as true to those he loves!"

The prince started impatiently. "The sun grows hot, Margaret," said he; "you were better in the shade."

"Then come in with me," urged Margaret, holding him pleadingly by the hand; "think how long it is since we have talked together, and how full my heart must be! Surely, if we are not to travel in company, you will not begrudge me one half-hour before you set out!" Margaret's was the face on which entreaty sits irresistible, and as her beseeching eyes were fixed on him, he looked irresolute, yielded, and reëntered the tent. "Now tell me, dearest," said she, striving to lift the heavy helmet from his head, "when will you quit these weary wars? Your face is homewards now; are you not coming home to live tranquil and happy with us once more? I am afraid you will be spoiled, Charles, and forget mother, wife, and children."

"That cannot be!" exclaimed the prince with energy, "I have the heart of a man still!"

"I believe it, Charles, — I believe it from the bottom of my soul! and no black calumny shall ever make me doubt your truth and fidelity," added Margaret, clasping her hands, as a bright look of confidence beamed over her face.

"Why," said the prince, with a look of some perplexity, "why such an asseveration?"

"O Charles!" replied she, "I hardly dare tell you why. It has been upon my lips all this time, but I have not dared utter it. They have slandered you, my husband; I know not who; but enemies of your fame have whispered the darkest insinuations against you; they have charged you with the blackest of crimes, — *ingratitude!* They have striven to make the noble Joanna herself believe you forgetful of the deepest and tenderest obligations that could bind man to a fellow-creature, — false, even to *her*, the mother of your desolate childhood."

The prince started up impetuously, and as he walked about the tent, the veins in his forehead swelled with agitation. "Who has done this?" exclaimed he; "whence came these tales?"

"I know not," said Margaret; "I asked not; it was enough for me to declare them false; and I would have died in the cause, had it been needful. They say that base, intriguing spirits abound in courts; but I thought that you, dearest, stood above suspicion, as above temptation. It was from the queen's own lips I heard the tale."

"And yet she dismissed you safely and honorably

from her court! Did she make no effort to retain you, — nor my children, — as pledges of my faith? Then she doubts me not, noble, generous, angelic being that she is!"

Margaret burst into tears. "O Charles!" she ejaculated, "could *she* but hear you! Come back to Naples with me, my husband; what need you of these troops? Leave them behind, and hasten with me to look once more on her beloved and beautiful face. Come to receive those benignant smiles with which she always welcomed you; the holy blessing, which you used to say kept all wickedness away from you. Next week will be the anniversary of our wedding day; let us keep it in the palace where she smiled upon our childish affection, — where she herself bade me love you till my dying day."

Charles was deeply moved; a tear even rolled down his manly cheek, as he looked upon the fair creature who clung to him. "I am, indeed, bound by the heart-strings to her who bestowed on me such a wife, were there no other tie," said he, in a low, sad tone, as if musing aloud. At that moment the curtained door of the tent was slowly drawn back, and the prince looked up sternly, as if indignant at the intrusion; but on seeing the person who stood there in silence, he changed countenance, and hastily disengaging himself from his wife, he seized his helmet from the cushion, replaced it on his brow, and left the tent with the stranger, without uttering another word.

Margaret remained immovable with surprise. As he stood with his back to the light, she had but faintly distinguished the face of the unbidden guest, — a tall monk, with a downcast eye and colorless cheek; but the sudden paleness and abrupt departure of her husband left her completely bewildered. Ere she had recovered from her amazement, the ground beneath her feet shook with the tread of a large body of horse, sweeping by at full speed; and in a moment more a page appeared, to announce that the Baron di Castiglione waited her orders. She hurried to look forth. The camp had entirely disappeared; a few heavy wagons were moving slowly from the field; her own small band were already mounting, and at a short distance she perceived the party which had just passed galloping towards the hills. At their head she easily recognized the stately form of Durazzo, and by his side rode the monk. Slowly and sadly she withdrew, and as her women crowded into the tent to assist in the bustle of departure, she was unconscious of the dismay her aspect excited.

If the journey to meet her husband had appeared long to Margaret, the same route retraced was intolerably tedious. Surprise at his demeanour, a vague anxiety, impatience to be once more in his presence, where she still felt as if all doubt and fear must be dispelled, took from her the power of enjoying either the conversation of her companions or the beauty of the scenery through which they passed. To find

herself in Rome, little as she cared for its Papal honors, was now the earnest object of her wishes; and on her last day's journey, as they ascended each hill, she gazed anxiously forward, in hopes of catching a distant glimpse of that city whose fame was bruited over the world, and whose power lay on the invisible spirit of man. She dreamed not, however, that this mysterious power was yet to crush her best hopes of happiness; that the influence of the tiara was to blight the remainder of a life hitherto so free from bitterness. Still less did she dream of the sad entrance she should make into its renowned streets.

The noontide halt was over, and the Baron had just given her the welcome assurance, that in four hours she would be within the walls of the Eternal City, when one of the children's attendants came, with an anxious brow, to announce that the little Joanna was ill. The princess hastened to her in alarm, and found the child reclining on the shoulder of her nurse, the rose color on her cheek heightened to a feverish scarlet, and her eyes dull and glazed. She stretched her arms to her mother with a faint moan. Margaret took her at once, and on applying to her attendants, found, to her dismay, that none knew what remedy to prescribe, or by what form of malady the patient was attacked. Nay, some of the more timid shrunk to a distance, and her quick ear caught the fearful word "contagion" among their stifled whispers. Clasping the little girl to her bosom,

she ascended the litter, and crying to the Baron, "Rome! Rome! — with all speed to Rome!" she sat in speechless suspense. Her children had been blessed from birth with unusual health, and utterly inexperienced as she was in the symptoms or management of disease, her emotions, on witnessing the sufferings she could not relieve, were almost agonizing. On they went, with a speed which at another time would have been unpleasing; but to her it seemed as if they crept along the interminable way; and to her incessant inquiries, "How far yet?" the answers only brought disappointment. At last the domes of the city rose above the level of the Campagna, along the dusky horizon; but without one throb of lofty associations, — one glance at the objects which surrounded them as they drew nearer to the Mistress of the world, — Margaret forgot every thing else in the increasing distress of her child. As the shades of twilight descended, she fancied death already painted on the livid features she discerned more dimly; and was at last hardly conscious that they had passed the Porta del Popolo, when they reached the threshold of a magnificent palace, appointed by the Pope himself for her reception.

The most skilful physicians of the day came at her summons. It was discovered that the little girl had not been well since the night when the princess had passed almost incognita through Rome, in her haste to join her husband; and that the building in which they had then slept stood near the Lateran,

recently discovered to have become so infected by the encroaching malaria of the marshes, that, during the summer months, it was abandoned to the insidious and invisible foe. The disease which had attacked the frame of the little Joanna was pronounced a dangerous, malignant fever; and after despatching a messenger to hasten her husband, still on the march, Margaret gave herself up to that most wearing, yet sacred, of duties, a mother's patient midnight watching by the couch of her suffering child. The solicitations of her attendants, the recollection of her rank, the danger to her health, — nothing could counteract the impulse of that common human nature, throbbing alike in the heart of the high and low; and the wife of the poorest peasant, nursing her squalid babe on the Pontine fens, could scarcely have envied the wealthy, beautiful, admired princess of Durazzo, as all night long she counted the weary hours, listened to the feeble moans of her child, held the draught to its parched lips, and laid its restless head on that pillow, which, in palace or cottage, is ever the softest, the bosom of maternal love.

CHAPTER IV.

After the departure of Margaret from Naples, the melancholy days of Joanna crept on, unmarked by any event distinct from the usual routine of her life. In the regular administration of her queenly duties, in the superintendence of many benevolent and public-spirited works which she had undertaken, in presiding over the court, which her own virtue and dignified deportment had rendered as remarkable for refinement as for magnificence, she sought to beguile the secret anxieties of her heart. Since the opening dawn of her life had been clouded by sorrows most peculiar, — by violent deaths or unlooked for treachery among her dearest friends, — she had ever worn an aspect of majestic pensiveness; and the open smiles, which had forsaken her countenance at eighteen, had never returned to illumine its more mature beauty. Gentle and affable in her demeanour, however, her habitual gravity did not banish innocent mirth from those about her; and she was loved, almost to adoration, by those who came oftenest about her person. Yet none were admitted completely into her confidence; the awe inspired by her rank and character was never dispelled by indiscreet communicativeness on her part; and not one of her most trusted nobility suspected how deeply the apprehension of coming evils, deadlier than all she had yet

known, was now haunting her hours of meditation. When the warlike spirit of her adopted son had led him, in spite of her remonstrances, to seek distinction under the king of Hungary, once her bitter foe, she had felt the want of a masculine mind and chivalric arm to counsel or defend her. Driven by necessity once more to form connections she had abjured, the duties which Charles had forsaken now devolved on a husband; and the unblemished, disinterested character of Prince Otho of Brunswick, suitable to her in age and accomplishments, did honor to her matronly judgment. It is of him that the graceful pen of Joanna's female biographer writes thus: — "Without demanding the title of king, or arrogating any power to himself, this generous, brave, and amiable man won and deserved the entire affection of his queen, and maintained her throne for some time in peace and security." At this critical juncture, he was absent in the southern part of his dominions, where some symptoms of insurrection among the rough mountaineers of Calabria had required the check of his personal appearance. So vague had been the rumors which had reached Joanna of the negotiations between Pope Urban, her implacable enemy, and Charles, her adopted son, that she forbore as yet to molest her husband with intelligence which she shrunk from believing.

She returned one evening from an excursion to visit the palace she was building under the brow of Posilipo. The romantic beauty of its situation,

where its very foundations were laved by classic billows, had not been overlooked by her elegant taste; and while anxious to give occupation to the artificers whom she had hitherto employed on churches and hospitals, she had designed it as a calm retreat for her declining years. In the present state of her spirits, she looked on the progress of the workmen with a sadness she could scarce conceal. Again and again she cast back her eyes, as she rode from it, surrounded by a gay party of courtiers; and the question forced itself continually on her mind, "Will it ever be completed? Shall I live to tread in its fair halls, and look from its windows over these blue waves? Or will some gloomy blight fall yet again across my path? Will my plans be frustrated, my spirits broken, my ever busy mind crushed by fresh sorrows? Then will the hand of the workman cease, the sound of labor be hushed; the lonely sea will murmur round the unfinished walls, the fisherman will hang his nets in its uncovered vaults, and the musing traveller shall pronounce it a sad memorial of the uncertainties that wait on all human schemes!"

She spurred her steed forward at last, to escape these melancholy thoughts, and a temporary excitement revived her drooping spirits, as she sped along the delightful Mergellina; the fleet Arabian on which she was mounted dashed over the firm, wet sands, as if with a consciousness of enjoyment; the breeze, which in that region comes down from the hills in

the afternoon, played with its bracing influences on her frame, and her whole train entered with zest into that most exhilarating pleasure, a gallop along a wide, smooth beach.

When she arrived at the private apartments of her palace in Naples, it was with an unwonted glow on her cheek, and a brightness in her eye, which spoke of her earlier and happier days. "My ride has done me much service," she said, as she drew off her silken glove, embroidered with gold, and turned to her private secretary, who waited her return with papers; "and now I think these dull documents will not make my poor head ache as of late." She took a sealed packet from his hand, as he said something of "a courier from Rome," changed countenance as she looked at the superscription, broke it open hastily, and, casting her eyes over the brief contents, dropped the parchment, staggered a few paces, and fell, as if stunned, upon a couch. The confusion which ensued lasted but a few moments; the alarm had hardly been given by her terrified secretary, when the recovering queen roused herself, and standing up calmly, though the late brilliant hue of her complexion had fled, and her hand convulsively grasping the back of a chair, she bade her female attendants quit the apartment; then directing the secretary to leave writing implements on the table, and see that couriers were in readiness to set out for Calabria, she dismissed him too. Motionless for a few moments after he left her, she gazed on the fatal packet which lay

on the floor, as if it had been a scorpion, and then, slightly spurning it with her foot, she murmured, "Man's vileness I may scorn! when God deals with me, may I be resigned!" Her eyes rose devoutly to heaven as she turned towards the table, where she seated herself and leaned her head upon her hand. Deep was the abstraction to which she yielded, and the groans, which at times escaped from her, showed how severe was her mental anguish; but she at last seized the parchment, and with a trembling, but practised and rapid hand, traced the following epistle.

"My good and well-beloved husband: —

"The blow is struck! the throne totters beneath my feet, and I call to you for aid. Charles of Durazzo claims the crown of Naples, by right of the Pope's investiture! His army hovers on the borders of my kingdom, and though my heart be pierced, I will yield nothing to injustice and ingratitude. Tarry not among the banditti of the mountains; for bolder, though baser, robbers are in the plains, and will soon beset the gates of Naples."

She sealed her concise summons, despatched it, and, with a brow full of lofty determination, descended to the apartment where some of the bravest and wisest among her nobility awaited her. They were thunderstruck at the intelligence she had to communicate; they broke forth in righteous indignation at

the viper she had cherished; and she alone was composed and self-possessed. She was forced to remind them that they met not to dwell on the past, but to take counsel for the future; and she proceeded to set forth her resolution to resist the aggression of Durazzo, sanctioned at it was by Urban himself. A spirited, but temperate and dignified, reply was sent to the manifesto of Charles; and arrangements were made to summon aid from her dominions in Provence, and to have the city in a posture of defence with all practicable speed. Each baron, as he left the presence of his queen, vowed fidelity with purse, sword, and heart's blood, to her person and rights. The lamps suspended along the galleries waned in their sockets, as Joanna passed to her stately chamber; the stars waned in the heavens before sleep visited her aching eyes.

CHAPTER V.

We return, for a short space, to the misguided Charles, Prince of Durazzo. He had left his wife abruptly, at the head of a strong party of horse, to overtake the main body of his troops, marching steadily south. In silence he rode on for some time, exchanging not a word with his immediate companion, — a monk, whose unusual sallowness of com-

plexion, emaciation of figure, and austerity of aspect marked him as one who strictly observed the rules of his order. The black robe and wide sleeves of the Dominican showed him to be a member of that powerful brotherhood, whose zeal in the cause of Papal supremacy, and success in attaining the office of confessors to kings and princes, had given them an influence over the destinies of men as unsuspected as it was terrible. It was in this unscriptural and unhallowed relation that Father Matteo stood toward the young prince by whose side he rode; the keeper of his conscience, the master of his secrets, the ruler of a towering spirit, which thought to be controlled by no earthly power. Without an effort to rouse Charles from his unwonted taciturnity, without the least apparent curiosity as to its cause, he kept his large, gloomy eyes fixed on the ground before him, in a cold abstraction, which contrasted strongly with the erect and open countenance of Durazzo, on whose features worked a constant succession of strong emotions. More than once the prince suddenly drew up, as from an irresistible impulse, and seemed about to accost his companion; but a glance at that stern, pale face appeared to have the power of checking the half-uttered remark, and muttering an ejaculation, he drove the spurs impatiently into his steed, forcing him into an idle caracole, that only betrayed the moodiness of his master's mind. They reached at last a grove of chestnuts, where the shade of those beautiful trees spread like an awning over the soft

grass; and Charles, as if his resolution were taken, gave some directions to his officers, and then, making a sign to the monk to follow him, rode away among the trees on their left, leaving the troops to pass on without them. In a few minutes they came to the brow of a cliff, and looked down upon a little quiet lake, hidden among the wooded hills. The sun was not yet high enough to shine on its smooth surface, and a tranquillity and freshness as of the early morning lingered on its shores. No human habitation was in sight; but on a promontory, which jutted into the water, stood the ruins of a small, ancient temple, classically graceful in its proportions, and beautiful even in decay.

In this still seclusion Charles paused, listened, and looked around; the heavy tramp of his troops came sounding indistinctly along the ground, the squirrel chirped as he leaped among the branches overhead, and the cry of the heron rose from the reedy border of the little bay below them; but there was no sign of intrusion from the approach of man. He turned upon his companion, and with a visible effort to speak in an unfaltering tone, he exclaimed, — "Father Matteo! the die is not yet cast. It is not too late to pause and consider the dark paths I am about to tread!"

The monk made no reply; he stroked the neck of his horse with his bony, gloveless hand, and a withering sneer passed over his lips, but he did not even lift his eyes to the speaker.

"No," pursued the prince, "it cannot be too late. So secret have been our transactions, so desperate is the deed contemplated, so madly have I been hurried on of late! — I will, I must pause to reflect yet again! There are moments when I am alone at midnight, in which things wear an aspect so different! It seems to me, holy father, that, whether I prosper or fail in this undertaking, I must be a miserable, miserable man. At one time I feel that I am lured forward by the glittering form of an ambition as glorious as becomes my princely race; then it seems as if the base goblin figures, Covetousness, Fanaticism, Treachery, beckoned me on to my destruction. Now, methinks, the voice of God is in my ear; then, the horrid whispers of a fiend! Father! it is dreadful."

"Is there nothing *more* dreadful?" asked the Dominican. Then, raising his voice above the sepulchral tone which seemed to have awed the prince for a moment, he slowly pronounced the words, — "Thy faith broken with man, the commands of the Holy Church mocked, the drawn sword basely sheathed, thy warlike fame tarnished, the sparkling crown withdrawn from thy unworthy brows, a woman's foot upon thy neck, the derision of nations on thy inglorious retreat, thy secret schemes made public and scoffed at because thou hadst not courage to carry them through, thy life dragged out in ignoble obscurity, thy death a passage to — eternal perdition, — Charles of Durazzo, how likest thou the picture?"

The face of Durazzo, red and pale by turns, spoke volumes; but mastering the internal struggle, he exclaimed, — "It is dark as midnight! I know that I am entangled almost beyond hope of extrication; that to advance or retreat must be alike desperate; that my worldly fortunes and happiness are already staked, and cannot escape the dreadful jeopardy. But, keeper of souls! I adjure you by all your holy vows, by your regard for the salvation of a fellow-creature, who has given you the direction of his conscience, by your reverence for God, and the Holy Virgin, and the blessed company of saints and martyrs, tell me one thing truly, — am I *right?* am I *right?* I ask you!"

A sudden gleam of triumph shot from the eye of the monk, as he heard this testimony to his still unshaken power; but it was gone in an instant, and his thin lips were compressed in a frigid and haughty silence.

Charles laid his hand almost imploringly on the coarse, black sleeve, and went on in a choked voice. "Tell me what crime can be fouler than ingratitude, — the very word is heavy on my tongue! — ingratitude to her who took me under the shelter of her palace when I was an orphan boy; and it is from that very palace I would drive her, now manhood has made me independent of her protection. I know her queenly spirit; she will not yield her natural rights without a struggle, and my hand must be raised against her in parricidal violence. My father was her

foe, and she forgave him. He fell by the hand of an assassin, and she took me, a beardless, helpless boy, scarce numbering twelve summers, to a home she made always happy. O holy priest! I tell you my manhood will wear an indelible stain if I wrong that more than mother! I told you so, when you first came to me with the tempting propositions of our most holy Father. I told you so in amazement and indignation; and how you have lulled those honorable scruples, how you have alternately lured and goaded me on to this wretched pass, I know not. The struggle was long and fierce, you well know, and now it begins afresh. Priest, I doubt! I doubt! banish these misgivings if you can. Prove, prove to me that the deeds on which I am rushing are not crimes, — base, unnatural, monstrous crimes!"

It was in tones of agony that the prince spoke. The perspiration stood on his forehead, and his eyes were fixed almost wildly on the monk, who had the advantage of perfect self-possession. Interlacing his emaciated fingers, clasping his hands to his breast, and raising his eyes to heaven, he seemed for a few moments lost in holy meditation; his lips then moved, and as audible sounds began to escape from them, the concluding words of a Latin prayer were articulated solemnly and distinctly. He then bent his penetrating eyes on the prince, with a gaze so long and fixed, that it became embarrassing, and in a tone unwontedly gentle and tender said, — "My son! to recede is guilt; to pause is guilt; to hesitate

is guilt; penance and absolution can alone wash away this day's errors. I have warned you; the consequences of a change in your purposes will be terrible; I cannot screen you from them. Worldly shame will hurry you to an ignoble grave; the malediction of the Church will blight and blast you for ever; and for what will you brave all this? Are you a man, that the smile or the tear of a woman's eye can thus work on the noblest purposes of your soul? Are you a prince, that, when a fair kingdom is at your disposal, and the arm of the Church is stretched forth to place you on an independent throne, you prefer to remain a vassal, because a woman has this morning whispered old tales of your nursery days in your ear! For shame, belted knight! for shame, armed warrior!" Then, changing his tone to one of deep and awful denunciation, — "Joanna must fall! She that brought you up at her footstool, to be the plaything of her idle hours, and her bravo when you should wear a sword, — she who would have kept you to glitter at her court, or fight at her bidding under a husband's banner, must come down from a height that dizzies her female brain. The realms of Naples are too fair and powerful to be longer swayed by the caprices of a woman. God hath given to his Vicegerent on earth the power to crown and uncrown; to distribute sceptres among the children of men, not according to the idle chances of birth, but in obedience to the nobler laws of the general good. She, on whose fame lie indelible

stains of evil report, whom the wrath of Heaven has pursued with incessant calamity, must sparkle no longer in the constellation of crowned heads. Among the courts of Europe hers must fade, with its boasted lustre. Her hour is come; and she must tell her beads in the silent cell of a recluse, and wear the stones of some secluded monastery with her humbled knees. Some bold heart, brave hand, and manly brow shall win and wear the prize suspended aloft. Prince of Durazzo, whose shall it be, — thine or another's? Choose!"

Charles sprung madly from his horse, and dashed himself on the ground, at the foot of a noble tree, his plate armour rattling as he fell prostrate. He remained plunged in a mental conflict the most severe; while the stately monk, drawing himself up to his full height, sat composedly watching the victim, as he struggled in the toils that were woven so invisibly but invincibly about him. The master-key had again been touched, and with a master's hand. Ambition, — the burning desire to exchange his ducal coronet for a kingly crown, — to step forward and signalize himself among the potentates of Europe, the peer, perhaps, of Louis of Anjou, Regent of France, — all worked within the compass of one human breast to accomplish his fate, and that of thousands linked with it. The bare idea of seeing a boon so glorious snatched from him, enjoyed by another, roused the jealousy of his nature, and made each better impulse of generosity, honor, and gratitude seem like the sickly fancies of some fever-fit.

He rose at last, but languidly, as if the struggle had taken the strength from his joints; and as he sat for a few moments with downcast looks, his fingers played with the moss and wild-flowers growing about the roots of the old tree; he even tore them up unconsciously, but his thoughts were not with those sweet, innocent objects of his boyish admiration. The hectic spot on his cheek showed that the passions of manhood were racking him within, and the big tears rolled slowly down his face. As the priest seemed resolved on a stern silence, he was not roused till a swelling breeze brought the faint blast of a trumpet from some distant winding of the road. His horse, grazing negligently beside him, lifted his head and pawed the earth at the well-known sound, and Charles, starting up, vaulted into the saddle. As he turned to regain the road, the hand of Father Matteo was laid firmly on his bridle. "My son," said he. The prince looked up, and met those penetrating eyes, bent upon him with their darkest austerity. "We must have no more of these scenes! no more faltering, no more baby talk! The die *is* cast; and your *soul* is the stake for which you play! Should the birds of the air carry the tale of this day's irresolution to the footstool of Urban ——"

Charles impatiently strove to dash forward, but the grasp of the monk on his bridle was not to be shaken off; and his horse reared so violently as almost to unseat the rider. "Whither so fast?" asked Father Matteo; "back, to play the hireling of a Hungarian?"

"Forward," shouted Charles, "to Rome, — to Naples, — to a bloody grave, please God!" — and bursting from the priest, he galloped with frantic speed in the direction of his troops, and soon disappeared among the trees. His confessor sat gazing after him a moment, and a smile of most unchristian exultation played again over his features. "The work speeds," he murmured to himself, "and he of the tiara shall say he chose well his instrument. Charles, men speak of thy virtues; but thou hast one passion which a master spirit shall use to exterminate them, and work his own ends. Ambition! — ambition! — the crown for him, — and for me — what lures me on but the scarlet hat, — and the hope of vengeance!" His head sunk on his breast, and he followed the prince at a more moderate pace.

CHAPTER VI.

Once more we revisit the beautiful city of Naples, and her whom its populace love, even at this day, to call "our Queen Joanna." But we pass over an interval of some weeks, since, struck to the heart by the treachery of Durazzo, she stifled the feelings of the woman, and prepared for the duties of the queen. Lofty and calm, she betrayed none of her secret grief, and showed no irritability or hastiness of temper.

She listened coolly when her officers came to consult with her, deliberated wisely, but acted with decision; while to all her immediate attendants the melancholy sweetness of her voice and manner had something in it so touching, that they were often melted into tears in the midst of their most ordinary intercourse. The panic among her women was indeed great, and not without cause.

Charles, expecting no acquiescence in his demands, and fully prepared to act, had marched with all speed upon Naples; Joanna had retreated into the Castell Nuovo, and had immediately ascended its ramparts. Lying on the east of the city, which rises like an amphitheatre from the north side of its celebrated bay, the walls of the castle were washed on one side by the sea; and thither she betook herself, fixing a long and anxious gaze on the hazy line where sky and water met; but not a speck appeared. The galleys from Provence were probably still ploughing their way through distant tracts of the Mediterranean. She went to another part of the castle, and looked eastward. The dust rising in clouds above the vineyards showed that Otho was advancing with all possible speed from Calabria; but alas! too late. Between him and his unfortunate wife the troops of Durazzo were pouring into the streets of Naples; and it was only tantalizing to watch his approach. Still, however, she stood with breathless interest, her eyes fixed on the spectacle, till an officer of her

household came to her with every mark of haste and agitation.

"The gates," he exclaimed, "the gates of the castle are beset by fugitives. We have closed them, but the cry is terrible. The wretches are flying before the sword of the enemy!"

"Admit them," replied the queen; "admit them instantly."

"May it please your Majesty," said an aged seneschal, "it will be your destruction; they bring famine with them as surely as they enter these walls."

"How," asked the queen, "have we no food? Did I not give orders three days since that the castle should be stocked for seven months? Was I not obeyed?"

"To the letter," returned the old man, one of the most trusted of her personal attendants; "your officers and your servants have done your bidding, and the provisions in the castle will last its present inmates full seven months; but we must have no more mouths to consume them."

The queen hesitated; the distant cries of the populace reached her, and one of her barons came hastily upon the wall. "Let me pray your Majesty to withdraw; one of the apartments by the sea will be more retired and quiet."

"Quiet!" said she, with a tone of mournful surprise; "what have I to do with quiet? Is this an hour for Joanna of Naples to seek ease and tranquillity? Why should I retire?"

"Because," replied the Baron, "the people at the gate are almost frantic with terror; their shrieks fill the air; it must distress you, for you cannot afford them the slightest aid."

"I hear them! I hear them calling on my name!" exclaimed Joanna.

"They do, indeed," replied the Baron; "they seem to invoke you as they would their saints. Let me implore your Majesty to leave the walls."

The tumult increased. "Are the gates strong?" asked the seneschal.

"As adamant," returned the Baron. "I bade the soldiers use no violence to drive the poor creatures back on the enemy; women and children can never burst such barricades."

"Holy Virgin!" cried the queen, "I cannot bear it. Let me see, let me speak to them."

The Baron threw himself respectfully before her. "I conjure your Majesty to abstain. It may wring your heart, but it can do no good; they cannot, they must not, be admitted."

"Luca di Battista!" said the queen, "stand back!"

She uttered these words gently, but with a tone of decision. He yielded instantly, and with a dejected air and anxious brow followed his royal mistress to a small apartment above the great gate of the citadel. This was one of the five fortresses by which Naples was strengthened, and seemed proof against assault. No sooner did the queen present

herself at the window which looked down into the thronged square, than the tumult redoubled; and for a moment she shrunk back and hid her face in her hands. It was indeed a startling sight. The throng consisted principally of women and children; the withered faces of the aged, the ghastly ones of the sick, all were upturned to her. Arms were stretched out imploringly, and every voice uttered her name, mingled with all those piteous phrases of entreaty in which the Italian tongue abounds. In vain she attempted to address them; as they looked up to her, standing in simple white raiment, without one regal ornament about her person, recognized for their queen only by her noble air and well-known countenance, it seemed as if they beheld in her some blessed female saint, who could save them from destruction by a single exertion of superhuman power.

Her gestures at last obtained a momentary hush. She was about imploring them to attempt their escape to another fortress, stating why she could not shelter them in the Castell Nuovo, when the silver tones of her voice were drowned in a shrill cry, which rose from the outskirts of the throng. In a moment the whole crowd was again in motion, those at a distance pressing towards the drawbridge, that crossed the moat, against those nearest the gate, until the struggle and crush became tremendous. The queen and her attendants saw too plainly the cause of the disturbance from their elevated position. Overlooking the heads of the people, their view extended

down a long street; and at its termination the flashing of swords showed a furious conflict going on. Some of the citizens were defending themselves vigorously as they retreated towards their helpless wives and children; but it was evident that their force was inefficient, and that the mounted soldiers of Durazzo were driving them in triumphantly. No sooner did the unhappy wretches at the gate become aware of this fact, than their agonizing cries again rent the air. "Our good queen! our blessed queen! have mercy on us! We shall be cut to pieces! For the love of the Holy Virgin, save us!"

The heart of woman could bear it no longer. Joanna turned suddenly, with tears rolling down her cheeks, to her officers, and bade them open the gates. They hesitated; but a momentary anger flashed from her eyes as she repeated her order, — "Luca di Battista! descend and see that those gates be unbarred to my people! Shall I stand here and behold them slaughtered like sheep? Admit them, or I will give my own neck to the swords of yonder cutthroats!"

The nobleman obeyed her in melancholy silence; and as the work of unclosing the huge double gates occupied some moments, the tumultuous throng heard with impatience the clang of the dropping bars and grating bolts; and when at last the doors were seen to move slowly inwards, the rush was dreadful. The shrieks of the bruised, the stifled cries of those who were thrown down and trampled upon, the confusion within, where the unhappy crea-

tures scattered themselves in every direction, — some still pale with terror, hardly realizing their safety, some flushed and heated with the struggle, some crying wildly for those they had lost in the press, — all produced a bewildering effect on the mind of the queen. She stood a long time immovable and almost breathless. At last a few bloody stragglers from the conflict came flying up the street, hotly chased by the enemy. There was barely time to admit them also, while volleys of arrows from a body of archers, whom Luca di Battista had stationed on the walls for the purpose, kept back the pursuers till the gates were again closed and secured.

Then, and not till then, the queen drew a long breath, and, turning from the window, looked for a moment at those about her with an expression of despair. "Could I have done otherwise?" said she. None answered, and the old seneschal alone shook his head sadly, and she passed into the gallery which conducted to her own apartments, leaving consternation in the little group behind.

Before night a strict investigation was made by order of the queen; and it was ascertained that, swarming as the fortress now was with human beings, the provisions it contained would barely enable her to hold out one month. Before that period should have elapsed success might crown the arms of Otho, or the expected aid from Provence might arrive; and leaning on these two chances, she was now condemned to that trial most wearing to the

nerves, a period of helpless inaction and cruel suspense. Durazzo occupied the city; her husband immediately laid siege to him; but though she could distinguish the camp of that brave warrior beyond the walls, and was aware of the frequent skirmishes going on between the parties, she found it impossible to open a communication with him. The difficulty of enforcing attention to the rules her forethought had laid down, and securing a wise abstemiousness among the motley population of the Castell Nuovo, gave her officers incessant perplexity within its walls. Her own table was spread with the absolute parsimony which circumstances made needful, and she herself underwent a perpetual fasting penance, setting an example of cheerful submission to privation; yet each day brought to her accounts of the alarming diminution in the public stock of provisions, and the necessity of lessening the scanty allowance doled out to the people.

Three long weeks passed on; day by day the walls were lined before sunrise with unhappy beings, straining their eyes seaward, to catch a glimpse of the hoped-for succors from their queen's French dominions, or striving to ascertain on which side success lay in the daily conflicts between Otho and Durazzo. The latter showed little disposition to assault the Castell Nuovo; the strength of its fortifications, defended by skilful archers, made him unwilling to waste the blood of his soldiers, while sure, from the circumstances of the case, that his powerful ally,

famine, would eventually give him a bloodless victory; and his immediate attention was engrossed by the harassing attacks of his own besieger. He contented himself with frequently summoning the queen to surrender; and she at last felt that a dreadful alternative was before her. She *must* surrender, or feel that she had brought a cruel and lingering death on some hundreds of innocent fellow-beings.

CHAPTER VII.

In the mean time Margaret remained at Rome, watching unremittingly over her little charge, whose spirit hovered for days on the verge of death; apparently about to quit its tabernacle of clay, yet still lingering, as if yielded a little longer to the prayers of maternal fondness. The instincts of her heart had led Margaret to forget every other possible evil in the dreaded calamity of bereavement. Even the mysterious delay of her husband was to her mind almost satisfactorily explained, when her attendants assured her that business of the most pressing nature had led him back to Lombardy. She questioned not the truth of their statements; her whole soul was absorbed in the conflict between life and death carried on beneath her eye; and as the superstition of the age led her to vow wealth untold to the altars of

that holy Mother, whose beautiful character and attributes shone like the morning star on the night of her sorrow, she felt the force of the loveliest delusion that ever mocked an aching heart. Trusting in the power of that sweet and gentle being to call back her darling from the threshold of the tomb, and unconscious that there was in her own nature a glorious principle of resignation, which could extract the bitterness from all affliction, and fit her to bear that which it was now intolerable to contemplate, she prayed unceasingly for one specific object, the restoration of her little Joanna to health. At last the unskilful pharmacy of that age was no longer baffled by the fierce disease; it was plain that the yet innocent soul of the patient was not to seek those realms of kindred purity, where temptation could never come nigh nor sin pollute it; it was to bear its terrible probation on earth. Alas! could the mother, whose tears of rapture bathed the creature she deemed rescued by her prayers, have seen the curtain of futurity raised, and Joanna the Second of Naples performing her disgraceful part amid the ignominious events!

Brief, however, was the transport of that hour in which her physicians announced that the child would live. Margaret had returned from the neighbouring chapel, whither she had hurried to pour out the overflowing gratitude of her soul; and she stood gazing on the emaciated object of her tenderness, when her reverie was interrupted by a benediction uttered in a

deep tone by some one behind her. She turned and beheld the Dominican standing in the doorway, with whom her husband had left her so abruptly at their last interview. She did not recognize him, however, nor did the idea of his identity with that unwelcome person occur to her, till he announced himself as the Father Matteo da Villani, the confessor of Charles of Durazzo. Then, indeed, she clasped her hands with a mingled emotion of joy and terror, as she exclaimed, — "And whence come you, holy father? from him, my beloved husband?"

"Even so," returned the monk.

"And how fares he? Why comes he not hither? When shall I see him again?"

"He sends greeting by me to his most noble lady, and asks tidings of the health of his child; and prays that, if her sickness pass away, you will come to him with all convenient speed."

Worn out as Margaret was with fatigue and anxiety, this fresh access of joy was received in eloquent silence. She folded her hands, and raised her eyes to a niche in the wall, where a lamp burnt before an image of the Virgin, — an image before which she had so often kneeled during her late cruel vigils. It was some moments before she found words to express her eagerness to rejoin her husband once more, whenever the health of her child should be sufficiently restored. "But you see!" she added, pointing to the cadaverous countenance of her patient.

Father Matteo cast a cold glance on the half-inani-

mate object, and said, "It is well. My errand to Rome was not of this; but coming on business with his Holiness, I likewise bore the message of your husband. When it is fitting, he will look for you in Naples; meantime, I return thither to-morrow, and ——"

"Naples! said you?" interrupted the princess, — "my husband in Naples? I heard you not rightly." She looked at her attendants in amazement, and their downcast, confused countenances excited her surprise still further. "What is this mystery? Why have I been deceived?" inquired the princess with increasing vehemence; "they told me he was in Lombardy."

"I know not what they may have told you, nor wherefore they have blistered their tongues with falsehood," resumed the monk calmly; "but I acquaint you with the truth. He is in his *home*, in the fair city of Naples."

A suspicion now broke on the mind of Margaret, and she faintly asked, — "What doth he there, sir priest?"

"He contends for the crown which God's Vicegerent hath given him, and besieges the dethroned Joanna in her citadel."

The unhappy princess heard not the concluding words; there was a ringing in her ears; the room seemed to turn round with a wavering motion, and muttering, — "Is he a villain?" she would have swooned heavily on the floor, if her attendants had

not caught her as she fell. The monk staid not to look on the sufferings of her whom he had felled with a word; but glided in the confusion out of the palace, and with a rapid foot sped towards the hill of the Vatican.

It was long ere sense returned to the princess; and when at last the indistinct recollection, that something dreadful had befallen her, stole on her mind, she eagerly uttered the name of her child, and looked towards the well-known couch, where all her anxieties of late had centred. Alas! a few more throbs of the reviving pulse, and memory performed her wonted functions too faithfully! The dreadful conviction of unworthiness in him she best loved, — the idea of the sufferings endured by her whom she regarded as a mother, and a model of female excellence, — by turns took possession of her imagination. Her frame, exhausted by long watchings and recent cares, was not prepared to endure this new and more intense agony of mind; and before daylight her alarmed attendants had summoned the physicians again to the palace, to exercise their skill on the unfortunate princess of Durazzo. A consuming fever had prostrated her so entirely, that her own life hung by a thread, while the child she had nursed with such tribulation of soul lay breathing still feebly in a neighbouring apartment.

The short Italian twilight was already descending, when Father Matteo hurried from the lonely Palazzo San Carlo; but almost the whole extent of the city

lay between him and the hill of the Vatican. The moon rose as he crossed the Tiber, and when he stood at length in one of the gardens attached to the palace, even then venerable with time, the fountain by which he paused showered drops of silver into its basin beneath her beams. The massy pile of buildings on which he gazed was already a collection of palaces, rather than a single, symmetrical edifice, cumbrous, gloomy, and inconvenient. The glories of the coming century had not dawned upon it, when, under the magnificent Julius the Second, its halls began to glow with the creations of a Raphael's imagination; when architecture, sculpture, and painting held counsel together, how they should render it most worthy to be the earthly residence of Him whose empire was not of earth alone. The genius of Michel Angelo had not yet suspended between heaven and earth that dome over the neighbouring cathedral which should be the admiration of future ages; the long line of pontiffs had not yet risen who should gather splendor after splendor round this favored spot, until it became what the astonished traveller now finds it, — a wilderness of wonders. But the new sanctity which was attached to it since the sacred Conclave had assembled within its walls, an arrangement of recent date, made it solemn in the eyes of all true Catholics; while the power of Urban the Sixth, cruelly and perfidiously exercised, lent to his gloomy residence no attractions in the eyes of the young and gay. The stillness of death brooded

over it; the part of the building which the monk had approached overlooked the garden with its long ranges of windows; but no one sat there to look forth on the moonlight, to enjoy the evening breeze and the fragrance of the orange-blossoms. Here and there, along the garden walks, silently glided the figures of some holy brethren, disappearing like ghosts in the deep shadows of the trees, with steps as stealthy as if pacing the cloisters of a Carthusian convent. The lonely owl, in the Coliseum, hooting as the moonbeams looked into his ivied retreat, could scarce have inspired a more mournful sense of desolation than was awakened by the hum of the populous city, coming so faintly on the ear, with the dash of the solitary fountain. It seemed as if the world, with all its living bustle and innocent pleasures, were indeed shut out from the haunt of religion. But the religion of those days did not teach that worldly cares and pleasures may be disarmed and sanctified by the spirit we may carry into them; or that to conquer temptation is better than to exclude it, if exclusion be possible.

Father Matteo paused to take breath after his long and hurried walk; and leaning against the trunk of a tree, he watched the palace with some anxiety. At last a glimmer appeared at a window; it passed on to another and another; and the figures of a few attendants, bearing lights, preceded and followed the form of a tall, aged man, as they passed along an extensive gallery. "It is he," murmured the monk;

"he goes to his private closet to await me; and this night I must sound the depths of that crafty bosom. He that deals with Urban must tread warily, for yonder dark chamber holds uneasy furniture for the limbs of those he loves not. They say the creaking of the rack disturbs some men more than the shrieks of the tortured trouble his ruthless spirit."

He again drew the cowl over his face, and approached a low door, in an angle of the buildings, which was opened at his knock. He passed along many passages, leaving others on either hand, through one of which he distinguished, far in the distance, the massy balustrade of that ancient, grand staircase, over which had passed the footsteps of Charlemagne, and beside it the equestrian statue of Constantine the Great, standing dimly seen and majestic beneath the lamps of the entrance hall. His course, however, was to the more private recesses of the palace; yet even there the presence of the Pope's body-guard showed a dread of danger, most natural in one who had been raised to power in a popular sedition, and whose claim must needs be as insecure as unjust. The monk cast not a glance on the stolid countenances of these automata, nor a thought on the incongruity which placed armed men round the Head of the Church; but pressed forward, till he found himself admitted into a small apartment, scantily furnished.

Before him stood a heavy marble table, covered with scrolls of parchment; and in a cumbrous arm-

chair beside it, without canopy or ornament of any kind, was seated a stern old man. His complexion was dark and bilious; every line of his countenance strongly marked; his forehead high and square; and above it rose a round, close cap of dark velvet. The tiara was of recent introduction, and used then, as indeed at this day, only on public occasions. Not a symptom of the extravagance which then inundated the civilized world had found its way into the Papal palace; neither gems nor gold glittered about the person of that stern denouncer of luxury, Urban the Sixth; and the very lamp which was suspended from the ceiling over his table was of iron. This affectation of simplicity corresponded ill with the number of valuable parchments scattered about the room, — a number which, in those days, was profusion; but he who had been distinguished as the learned Archbishop of Bari, had not forgotten his pride of erudition; so various are the forms worn by that most insidious of human passions.

There was one person more present; a young man of slight figure and mild aspect, who sat apart, as if waiting the pleasure of a superior. The attention of the Pontiff seemed absorbed by the illuminated manuscript volume, over whose purple vellum pages he was poring; the monk stood unnoticed; and though from time to time he made slight movements to attract the eye of Urban, he dared not approach the table. At last the youth spoke in a low voice, and the haughty prelate, looking up, coldly saluted

the new-comer, and demanded the tidings from Naples.

"I have left it in the hands of Durazzo," replied the monk; "and though the queen still holds out, the Castell Nuovo is rather her prison than her fortress. She never can issue from it but as a state-prisoner."

"And Otho?" asked the Pontiff; "his troops beleaguer Naples, we have heard."

"It is so," answered Father Matteo, "but to no purpose. Famine wastes the flesh of the wretches whom Joanna's folly admitted within her walls, and the sword of her husband avails her little. A few of her nobles deserted her on the arrival of a prince, whose claims were announced to be sanctioned by Heaven itself; and as I came by stealth through the troops of Otho, there I found disloyal scruples working in the minds of many."

"It is well, — it is well!" exclaimed the Pope, his sullen eye sparkling for an instant. "On such ground I plant my foot. The power of the Church rests on public opinion; I have sworn to myself that no tittle of the rights claimed by the most noble of my predecessors, Gregory the Seventh, shall be wrested from my hands; and princes must know, past all doubt, by what tenure their bawble sceptres are held. This woman, who disputes the authority of the Holy See, and cleaves to Antipope, — how stands the affection of your prince towards her?"

The monk hesitated somewhat before he answered: — "It is still strong."

"How!" cried the prelate; "he wars upon her, — he keeps good faith with us, doth he not?"

"Ay, so long as the skilful hand is on the bridle, he will not dart from the course; but I may not conceal from your Holiness that he hath given me much trouble at times."

"Say on; open this man's heart before me. I must know with what instruments we have to work."

As he spoke, the pontiff rested his head on his hand, and fixed his searching eye on the monk, who felt under it the consciousness that he was himself subjected to the keenest scrutiny. He went on calmly, however: — "My trouble with the hot-headed prince hath arisen from many fond fancies he cherishes concerning the gratitude due to the queen of Naples, and the obligations of his youth. He is brave to heroism, generous and open, full of what men call noble feelings and good impulses; but ductile, unsteady, and devoured by ambition."

"He is the man I thought him," said Urban; "he is the man we want."

"I believe it," replied the monk; "but great as is his reverence for the Church of Rome, his belief in the infallibility and supremacy of the Holy See, his dread of its denunciation, and strong as is his thirst for power, there are counteracting principles in his nature that must yet be crushed, before we can

rely upon him. A single interview with his wife in Lombardy, if I had not cut it short, would have undone all my labor."

"Hath she such influence?" asked Urban, knitting his brows. "She must be disposed of."

"She is so. I have no fear from that quarter for the present; for I came upon her, when already half dead with fatigue and anxiety, and when I told her, with intentional abruptness, the part her husband plays at Naples, she dropped as if smitten by a thunderbolt. She will not cajole the soft heart of Durazzo very speedily, for, if I mistake not, she will be little able to thrust herself among the counsels of men till the purposes of your Holiness are completed. It is from Joanna herself, — from the sorcery that she exercises over all who approach her, — that we must keep this warrior. His wife but spoke to him of the queen, and his firmest resolutions dissolved like vapor in the sunbeams. What effect will the aspect, the words, the reproaches, the tears, of the queen herself have upon him? It was your pleasure, as to my management on this point, I came to know."

Urban's countenance grew darker and darker. "Is the faith of Charles pledged to you, in behalf of my nephew here?" asked he.

"It is; as surely as he mounts the throne of Naples, so surely will he put the Count Butillo in possession of the domains he hath promised. I have not a doubt whether he will keep faith with your Holiness in this matter. Let him but conquer the

feelings which plead in behalf of Joanna, and the work is done; he is ours for ever. The sole obstacle we have to overcome is in his devoted attachment to that woman. If that is not wrought upon by herself, or any other subtle enemy to our plans, he will go all lengths. Yet she has many friends; and giving out, as she does, that your Holiness has accepted costly gifts from her, and professed much friendship for her of late, a suspicion of duplicity has alienated many good Catholics from their allegiance to the true Head of the Church."

The monk watched the effect of this allusion on the pontiff; but the harsh features of Urban were undisturbed. "It is true," he coolly remarked; "for the good of the Church, not for our own emolument, we have received her gifts, and we have kept terms with her till our plans were matured. It is now time that her unmanageable spirit be quelled, her luxurious court be broken up, and our supremacy made to blaze forth before the eyes of all the potentates of Europe. She must be made a warning, — a fearful one; and I charge you, Matteo da Villani, to see that neither she, nor the pretty doll, her niece, gets access to the heart of this prince of yours. He must be on the throne of Naples, for there he can serve us. Whether men work for us from the pure wish to aggrandize the Church, or from the hope of reward, we must use them."

The monk, who had been so calm and decided when dealing with the feebler nature of Durazzo,

now felt himself overmatched by an abler and craftier intellect than his own. The eye of Urban was still upon him, cold and stern, watching each change of his countenance, as he vainly strove to control its muscles; and he was conscious that he visibly shrunk from a glance which seemed to penetrate his inmost purposes. He looked at the door and at the youthful nephew of the Pope alternately, uncertain whether to retreat, or to venture farther into conference with one so powerful, so wily, and so remorseless.

Urban perceived his embarrassment, and relaxing his gloomy brow, added, — "The Church hath rewards, it is true, for those who serve her skilfully and faithfully, and on none can her honors be better bestowed. Your order, Father Matteo, stands preeminent in services, and in your person we must find one who will both carry forward our interests and grace our favors. I bind myself by no promises, mark me," he added, observing the brightened eye of the monk; "but I bid you go back to Naples, and persevere in the work you have undertaken. I will take care that *my* physicians visit the Princess Margaret; and if they manage their drugs aright, her recovery shall be conveniently tardy; while you, without molestation from her presence ——"

The cold-blooded pontiff was here interrupted by an ejaculation from the young man, who sat almost behind him, and who arose suddenly. Urban looked at his troubled countenance a moment with some expression of surprise, and then said quietly, — "Fran-

cis! you are but a boy, and a faint-hearted one. I must indeed provide for him who hath neither a politic brain nor a strong hand. Go forth! a moonlight walk is fitter pastime for you than these grave colloquies. I will take sufficient care of your interests. You shall be Prince of Capua, and hold sway over a region whose soft clime may suit you well."

The young man left the room hastily, untutored as yet in the dark policy of the court of Rome, and rejoicing to escape from participation in counsels so nefarious; while the monk looked as if relieved by his absence, — so true it is, that there are times when the most hardened in guilt feel some wholesome awe in the presence of innocence. The door had scarcely closed, when he drew nearer to the table, and in a lower tone, with his eyes fixed inquiringly on the countenance of Urban, he asked, — "Will it please your Holiness to give me your commands, your final commands, respecting the course to be pursued?"

"Do you not comprehend the scope of my wishes?" said Urban; "have I not been sufficiently explicit?"

"My instructions have not been definite," returned the monk; "how far this prince must be driven, to what measures we may have recourse, in order to bend this haughty queen, I know not."

"She must bend or break," replied the Pontiff.

"She will never yield her crown, save with the head that wears it," urged Father Matteo.

The pontiff paused: — "And you choose not to

venture *too* far, without the sanction of my express command! You are a wise and cautious man, Matteo da Villani, and must needs prosper in these troubled times. Now bear in mind what I say to you. That mock-pope at Avignon wins men's hearts by his courteous words and gentle deeds; I shrink not from dipping my hands in the blood that would gush from the neck of Joanna, queen of Naples,—you know that I should not; but interest, good Matteo, interest bids me work by measures more politic. Let this Charles of Durazzo be goaded on by every spur you can apply to a spirit so fiery; and either in the hot hour of victory, or in some moment of despair, when she blocks up his way, manage *him* well, good confessor, and you will find no need of precise directions from me."

The face of Father Matteo again gleamed with the terrible smile of exultation it wore, when Charles left him at their last important interview; and that involuntary smile was marked by a shrewd observer. "I would have you speed to Naples," said Urban, "for your business there is weighty; but before our conference close, I will ask you a plain question, and that is what you least look for. Why do you harbour malice, — bitter, persecuting, vindictive malice, against the queen of Naples?"

The monk for an instant stood dumb. He found himself completely unmasked before one to whom the most iniquitous windings of the human heart were familiar. But, taking courage from the very

emergency of the case, he resolved to unfold his whole secret to the man whose sympathies were believed to be with all things dark and cruel. His frame shook, and his emaciated cheeks became livid, as, almost leaning on the tables, he said in a suppressed, hoarse voice, — "I am the son of that Conrad Wolf whom she drove ignominiously from Naples. Clement the Sixth and his cardinals had unanimously acquitted her of the fearful charge of having murdered her husband. She came back in her pomp from Provence. I saw her triumphant pageant, — and then I saw my father die in obscurity. He had been mangled by the infuriated populace, that had risen in her behalf, — and I swore to avenge him. I swore that she too should die a violent death!"

Urban looked steadfastly on the convulsed features of the monk, working with the worst passions of human nature. "I have seen the German governor of whom you speak," said he; "I recognize him in every lineament of his son's countenance. All men said that he merited his fate."

"I care not! I care not!" cried the monk. "Forgive me, Holy Father, that I forget in whose presence I stand. My feelings do not often burst forth thus; but for years they have flowed on in a deep, steady, strong current, that leads to sure revenge."

"Thou art of the *wolf's* own race, I see," said Urban, with a bitter smile; "and truly there is a promise that thy thirst for blood may be quenched. Go to Naples, to Naples, my son! If I love not its

haughty queen, I need but give her up to thy tender mercies; and that I surely will, if she do not grovel in the dust beneath my feet. Leave us and set forth, for the hours are precious; others have now claims on my time."

The sound of footsteps was heard in the anteroom, and the monk, stifling his agitation, took a hasty leave. Uneasy at being thus hurried away, he regretted having been thrown off his guard, and resolved to lose not an instant in hastening back to Charles, and watching for the propitious moment to accomplish his own purposes, by the hand of another. "If Joanna prove a feeble and fickle woman," he thought, "and yield all required homage to this proud pontiff, she will escape me yet! He will not scruple to play me false." Miserable with the doubts and anxieties that harass a bosom on whose schemes the blessing of Heaven cannot be invoked, and feeling how little reliance the unprincipled can place on each other, Matteo da Villani hurried from the dark precincts of the Vatican; and as day broke over the Sabine hills, it lighted him and his small train along the melancholy wastes of the Pontine marshes.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was on the afternoon of the twenty-fifth of August, that Joanna ascended the walls of the Castell Nuovo, with a languid step, to look once more sorrowfully over the bay, for "hope deferred" had almost settled into the sickness of despair. Day by day she had seen misery deepening in the haggard countenances of those about her; and now, as she passed, every eye rolled upon her glassy and vacant; every cheek was hollow with want; and as the women and children sometimes held out their meagre hands to her, silently imploring the succour she could not give, she turned from them hopelessly to the warriors, whose gaunt limbs and unsteady steps told as fearful a tale of the sufferings their own stronger frames endured. She had pledged herself to surrender on the twenty-sixth, if the expected aid from Provence should not arrive; and clinging to the last slender chance of relief, she riveted her gaze on the too familiar entrance of the harbour, with an intensity that sometimes almost seemed to conjure up the dim outlines of objects she longed to behold.

It was while thus absorbed, and striving to realize that the *last* sun of her freedom was sinking rapidly in the western skies, that she was roused by a moan near her. She had been too much accustomed of late to sounds of woe to be easily startled; but

this was like the last faint groan of dissolution; and turning hastily, she perceived a wretched object lying in the shadow of a turret near her. It was an elderly female, whose features were drawn out and sharpened by the pangs of hunger and the approach of death. Her head was supported by a pale, thin youth, who occasionally wiped the damps from her forehead, and, as he stooped forward to watch the life coming and going in her fixed eyes, was unconscious of the queen's approach. Joanna had as yet heard of no actual death from starvation in her garrison; and struck to the heart by this spectacle, she involuntarily drew near, and stood before the expiring woman. For a moment she was recognized; the poor sufferer made a feeble effort to raise her head and stretch out her bony hand, whispering, "It is the queen, our good queen." The young man looked up, but did not move; and after a momentary relapse, the woman again uttered, falteringly, "Serve her, Giovanni! I charge you, my son, serve our good Joanna!"

The queen was choked with emotion, as she heard these words of affection from a subject, dying so miserable a death at her very feet; and again she felt, as she had often done, the littleness of all human power. She was still a queen, — still an object of veneration to this departing spirit; but not in her proudest days could she have stayed its flight one moment. It might be some such consciousness that floated through the mind of the young Giovanni;

for after the first glance, he seemed to forget the presence of majesty, until Joanna, unable to look idly on the convulsive spasms of the dying woman, turned hastily away, and commanded an attendant to bring food, if it were the last crumb in the fortress.

The youth then, impatiently moving his hand, exclaimed, "No! no! it is too late!" It was indeed; in another moment, his mother again, as with her last struggle, said more distinctly, "Serve her, my son, for she has been good to us!" and then turning to his breast, drew her limbs upwards with a shiver, and after a few gasps, ceased to breathe.

The cry, which seemed to break from the heart of the youth, rang terribly in the ears of the queen, and incapable of speaking consolation amidst the first bursts of filial sorrow, she retired at once to her apartments, and herself gave directions respecting fitting burial for the body. It had seemed to her that those emaciated features had not been unknown to her in former days; and when at sunset her attendants informed her that the youth requested permission to see her, she eagerly ordered him to be admitted into her presence. He was scarcely eighteen; and his hunger-stricken countenance betrayed that youthful vigor alone had enabled him to sustain the fearful ordeal under which his mother had sunk. He was now calm, though the traces of sorrow remained on his swollen eyelids. His soiled but once costly apparel showed him to be no menial; and the modest courtesy with which he thanked the queen for

her kindness was that of one who had been accustomed to approach personages of high rank. His face, too, had in it something familiar; and Joanna sought in vain to recall when and where she had seen him. "I cannot forget my mother's last words, so long as I have breath," said he, with a faltering voice. "She bade me serve you; to-morrow may take away the power; and I have come to ask your Majesty, if it be indeed possible that I may obey her commands."

"Tell me first," said the queen, "who is the faithful son and true subject, that forsakes neither his mother nor his queen in their adversity?"

"I was a beardless boy when your Majesty last saw me, but suffering hath changed me more than time. My mother has often told me how, at the close of the terrible pestilence, you reëntered Naples from your exile; and how you passed one day, like a radiant angel, all pomp, youth, and beauty, through the street where she lived, when my father fell smitten by the destroying angel on his own threshold; how your attendants stood back terrified, while you came down from your palfrey, and courageously held water from a neighbouring fountain to his lips, and spoke comfort to her; and how you protected the widowed and fatherless, when his corpse was thrown into the dreadful pit. Have you forgotten that, when you discovered her to be of gentle birth, you gave her a place among the attendants of your own lovely infant?"

"I remember it all," cried Joanna. "When God smote my child in its cradle with sudden and mysterious death, I came back from the gorgeous ceremonies of my coronation to forget its splendor in the rosy smiles of the darling whom I left slumbering in perfect health, and your mother stood sobbing over its lifeless clay! I have not seen her for years past, but could I forget her?"

"Your bounty reached her," said the youth, "and for me you provided nobly."

The queen's countenance changed. "I recognize you too," said she; "I procured you an appointment in the household of my son, — of Charles of Durazzo. You were his page, I think?"

"I am so," replied Giovanni.

"And what do you here?" asked the queen hastily.

"When my master approached Naples," said the page, "I hurried forward to protect my mother. I found her feeble from recent illness, and she reproached me because I did not forsake him for his treachery to you. I could not! I could not! for to me he has been a noble and kind master, and I love him. The people fled in all directions, and she conjured me to bring her hither. We entered with the throng, and I staid to soothe her sufferings, — to support her while I could, — to see her die at last. And now I would go back to my kind, generous, misguided prince."

Joanna sat a few moments lost in thought; and

then suddenly repeating his last words, — "Misguided prince! alas! alas!" — she strove to repress a groan.

Giovanni spoke not, but his varying countenance expressed shame for the master he adored, and respectful compassion for the injured sovereign before him. At last he inquired timidly, "Is there no way in which the page of Durazzo can aid the queen of Naples? You will not bid me leave him."

"No, no!" cried Joanna; "God forbid that those to whom he may have shown kindness should prove ungrateful! May *that* punishment never wring his heart! Go to him, faithful boy, and serve him so far as you can innocently, through joy and sorrow, through the deceitful hours of guilty prosperity, and the dreadful season of retribution. *I* ask no other kindness at your hands."

The youth burst into tears, and sunk on his knee before her; it was the homage of uncorrupted feelings to her virtue rather than her rank; and Joanna's dry and burning eyes were moistened with an emotion most grateful in the midst of her afflictions. "Is there nothing, — nothing I can do for my august sovereign? I would fain perform somewhat that I may be glad to remember when I am a man, — some service to her personally."

The queen shook her head; but as the youth rose, something crossed her mind, and she exclaimed, — "Yes, stay! My poor husband! — we may never meet again, and a line from my own hand would

cheer his brave heart! Giovanni, will you leave the honored remains of your mother under my charge? There are priests in the fortress and her dust shall not be neglected. I will have masses said for her soul. But speed you forth this very night into the city to rejoin your master; and find means to bear one farewell word from your unfortunate queen to her husband. Will you undertake it?" The young man hesitated, and she added, — "I would not have you peril your life, and you know best yourself with what risks the enterprise may be fraught. I do not urge it."

"It is not of my life I am thinking," said Giovanni, "but of my honor; yet I know not that I should pass the bounds of duty to my master in fulfilling your request. My mother's dying words are in my ears, and I will obey them at all hazards."

The queen paused a little longer for reflection; and then, turning to a table, where lay her writing implements, she penned a hasty note of affection to Otho, apprising him of her approaching capitulation, and bidding him a solemn farewell; for she felt that her future destiny was darkened by the prospect of a long separation. Giovanni departed at twilight, and by the queen's command was permitted egress from the castle through one of the subterranean passages leading to the water's edge. We need not follow him; it is sufficient to say, that, having presented himself to his princely master, with whom he was deservedly a favorite, and explained his absence, he

found means to convey the letter of Joanna into the enemy's camp, and to the hands of Otho, before day-break. Meantime the queen forgot not her promise with regard to the poor woman who had died in her presence; and on the last evening of her cruel siege, the most solemn services of religion were performed in the Castell Nuovo, by those who felt that, if relief were not at hand, their own enfeebled limbs might next lie down in the grave.

Few slept in the wretched garrison on that night. Reduced to the last extremity, many of the famishing wandered about ceaselessly, hushing the moans of their children, watching the slow march of the stars, and, as the hours wore on, casting many an impatient glance to the east. The faintest silver light was breaking over the hills, when Joanna left a couch haunted by horrid dreams, and went up for the last time among her people, — few and faithful, — to survey the uprising of the sun which would probably light her into captivity. All night long she had been tormented with visions of blood, or with phantasmagoria of the ghastly faces that met her by day; and as the pale dawn of the fatal twenty-sixth of August gave them again to her view, hovering along the walls like spectres, she shuddered, and felt that any fate to her would be welcome, which might save these unhappy creatures from the slow and torturing death of famine. As the eastern horizon grew brighter and brighter, she had not the heart to look, as she had once done, on that gorgeous spectacle, which

never wearies the eyes of the happy; but, turning to the sea, vacantly contemplated the harbour, and Capri rising dimly on the southern verge. Her thoughts were no longer on the promised aid from France; treachery had beset her all her life long, and Durazzo had blighted the last remaining germs of her confidence in mortal man. "Gay Provence has forgotten me," said she to herself; "the mild and affable Clement will not aid me; Anjou is too busy with his own pressing cares. There is no man living that can or will strike one blow more for the liberties of Naples or its deserted queen! Even my husband has not the power to help me, or knows not how critical is the emergency. O Charles! the bitterness of all bitterness is to feel that *thou* hast made my misery! — that in two short hours more, thy unnatural crime will be consummated, and I shall be hurled from the throne by the very hands I have so often clasped in mine, when thou wast like a loving son to me, — an innocent, affectionate, true-hearted boy! Shall I not awake, and find it all a terrible dream?"

The time had indeed been fixed at two hours past sunrise, when the Castell Nuovo was to be yielded, without condition, into the power of Durazzo; and though Joanna did not face the east, she knew when the glorious luminary had lifted himself above the Apennines; his rays shot across the city and bay, and gilding the ridge of Posilipo, called, as it were, into bright existence its wooded heights and white

villas. Still she sat motionless; her officers silently gathered about her; and from the various subterranean passages and cells of the fortress its whole wan and trembling population came pouring up, as if the graves were yielding their dead. The walls next the city were lined with them, standing, sitting, or lying, as their strength permitted, in mute expectation. A clock struck in a neighbouring church; it was the only one in Naples, and still a new thing on the earth, and men, not yet familiar with it, felt, when that solemn voice came forth on the air, as if Time himself spoke to them, while he sped on his awful course. Even the queen started at the sound, and withdrew her sad contemplations from the monastery of San Martino, the object of her munificence in happier days. Battista recalled her attention to the same quarter, however, by pointing out something about the castle of St. Elmo, which frowned on the heights just above it; and with looks of surprise, she conferred with her officers for some moments before she left the walls. She retired to her private apartment, as the hour of surrender arrived; but Luca di Battista followed shortly, to inform her that, though the city was evidently in commotion, no one approached the fortress. "The passage leading into the Strada di Toledo is deserted," said he; "we see armed men continually passing and repassing across it at a distance, and there is a sound of tumult that increases every moment; but *we* seem to be forgotten."

The queen, who had assumed a noble composure, now became agitated. "I believe you were right," said she; "that brave boy kept his word with me last night, and Otho is roused to an effort that may cost him dear."

"He must have attacked the city," returned the Baron; "I know of nothing else that could withdraw the attention of the enemy at this moment. Courage, my queen! We may be saved!"

"No, — no," replied Joanna; "do not excite false hopes, my good Baron; it is the alternation of hope and despair that frets out the heartstrings. Had the galleys from Provence arrived, a general onset from without might have done me good service; and for that advantage Otho has no doubt waited; but the news of my unhappy condition has driven him on a desperate measure. He will fail; my heart forebodes nothing but evil."

"Nay," exclaimed the nobleman; "think better of it. Your Majesty is worn down with fasting and anxiety, and they make even men prone to despond."

"I know it," said Joanna sadly. "The weakness of this frail tabernacle of clay does strangely debilitate the nobler tenant within. I will repair once more to the walls."

As she approached a flight of steps, leading from a court up to the ramparts, a large hound, still stately in his proportions, though extenuated by famine, crawled towards her, whining and feebly making

demonstrations of joy at seeing her. He had belonged to her husband, and had once saved his master's life in a boar-hunt; and though not another animal in the fortress had been spared, Joanna had given orders that this faithful creature should not be slaughtered till the last extremity. He had not tasted food for three days; and as he looked up expressively in her face, with his large, imploring eyes, the Baron said, — "Methinks it were greater humanity to knock the poor beast on the head, than let him die by inches. Starving is an ugly death."

The queen looked irresolute; she passed her hand over his long, velvet ears, and as he stooped his head to receive the caress, the gold collar which her husband had playfully fastened round his neck, as the reward of his bravery, caught her eye. "No!" she exclaimed, turning away; "I have not the heart to give such an order. Live on, a few hours longer, poor Brancone, and thou shalt have a new master. Di Battista, he that will enter this castle to-day as a victor loves a noble dog, and will feed the hound, though he starve the mistress."

"Ay," said Di Battista to himself; "the dog hath no crown to be coveted."

They mounted to the walls; and as Joanna seated herself where she could look down into the square between the castle and the city, she felt something touch her hand. It was the dog, who had followed her with difficulty; and as she bade him couch at her feet, obedient to the last, he lay, or rather fell,

down before her, and stretching forth his limbs, tried to forget, in uneasy sleep, the hunger that gnawed his vitals.

In the mean time the clashing of weapons came now distinctly on the breeze, and as the inhabitants of the castle stood listening breathlessly, wonder and anxiety were on every face. At times the skirmish seemed to recede, and then it approached again; but nearly an hour elapsed, before any token of the battle presented itself. Suddenly shouts were heard more plainly. A cloud of dust was seen rising above the houses in the Strada di Toledo. It advanced slowly, and at last a tumultuous throng appeared at the foot of the street, leading from that main thoroughfare of Naples to the square before the Castell Nuovo. Half veiled in dust, and engaged in furious conflict, they came on; but it was plain that every inch of ground was contested, and the progress of the party struggling to reach the castle was tardy.

Frantic with joy and reviving hope, Luca di Battista summoned his feeble band of archers to their posts; and though it was evident that scarcely a dozen had strength to draw the longbow, he prepared boldly to aid the approaching friends, and exclaimed again and again to the queen, — "Courage, my noble mistress! they fight like lions! We shall open the gates to them presently."

The queen did not remove her eyes from the scene, but, still sorrowful in aspect, only answered, — "They bring us no bread."

"But they open a passage through the enemy," cried the sanguine warrior; "they will find means to throw in provisions, or set us free, trust me!"

At this moment, a single knight, mounted on a powerful bay horse, burst through all opposition, and waving his bloody sword above his head, came galloping into the square. The white and silver scarf about his body, despite its crimson stains, showed that he belonged to the queen's friends; and Di Battista shouted loudly and incessantly to the men at the gates to open them and push forward the drawbridge. Before the brave knight could reach the moat, however, several of the enemy dashed after him into the square; and as he turned to defend himself, still backing his horse towards the castle, their strokes rained upon every part of his armour. The flash of weapons in the broad sunlight was dazzling to the beholders, but he who fought single-handed against such fearful odds lost not his presence of mind for an instant; — plunging his sword into a crevice in the armour of one antagonist, he drew it forth reeking; then, suddenly wheeling about, he dexterously hamstrung the steed of another rider, who came heavily to the ground, and left him for a moment unmolested. He again pushed towards the drawbridge, but in vain; the enemy were upon him. Two spurred between him and the castle, and not a follower of his own had yet emerged from the street; his headlong valor had led him beyond their assistance; but, without a shout or a word, he defended

himself manfully. The archers discharged their arrows from the battlements; but many of them dropped short of the mark, and others fell impotently, as if sent by the hands of children, against the helmets and shields of the assailants. Luca di Battista raged like a chained tiger; and crying, "Give me a crossbow, — it brings the strong and the weak on a level," he seized a huge arbalist, and prepared to discharge it with his own hands. The queen, meantime, had watched every movement below with the most intense interest; she had started up as the knight entered the square, and standing with clasped hands and blanched lips, her garments fluttering in the breeze, she seemed almost ready to leap wildly into the fearful scene. Once or twice she exclaimed, "Who is he, Di Battista? do you not know him?"

"No, not I," cried the Baron; "he is a brave man, bear he what name he may; — and we will have him among us, please Heaven."

The unknown warrior was now within a few yards of the moat, and once, for a single instant, he looked up at the spot where the queen stood; but through his closed visor she could not discern his features. "Yet it must be he! it can be none else!" she whispered to herself; and the blood rushed joyfully to her face, as she perceived several knights in white and silver scarfs present themselves at the entrance of the square. It retreated upon her heart again, however, as a huge soldier, already unhelmeted in the conflict, and gashed on one cheek, ap-

proached the solitary combatant, whose attention was again for a moment drawn off, by the appearance of his followers. The man raised his immense battle-axe unheeded, as the warrior, sending forth his voice for the first time, shouted to his knights to come on. No sooner was that voice heard, than the hound, who had been lying, apparently unable to stir, by the side of Joanna, uttered a cry, and getting on his feet with difficulty, crawled to the very edge of the wall. He gazed down earnestly a moment, then, raising his head, snuffed the breeze, and having uttered a few moans, as if conscious of the danger, he sprang down into the moat. Too feeble to swim, he struggled but a few instants, and sunk in the stagnant waters. This last display of fidelity in poor Brancone told Joanna too plainly who was the heroic knight; her agony of suspense was already dreadful, and a shriek broke from her lips, as Luca di Battista discharged an immense javelin from his crossbow. At the precise instant that it left the bow, aimed at the man who wielded the battle-axe, the beset knight perceived his danger, and to avoid the blow levelled at his crest, checked his steed, who in rearing intercepted the weapon from the walls. It pierced his shoulder; the noble animal made a plunge forward, and thus exposed the head of his rider to the fatal stroke of the battle-axe. It descended, — the helmet gave way, — and the light German hair and manly features of Otho were exposed to view, as he was dashed senseless to the ground!

Joanna knew nothing more. For the first time in her life she fainted away utterly, and was carried down to her apartment.

CHAPTER IX.

The desperate valor of Otho was wasted; with his fall ceased the conflict. Slain, wounded, or made prisoners, his troops suffered severely from the enterprise; and before noonday the ruin of Joanna was decided, her last hope destroyed. She bore the intelligence with fortitude, however. On recovering from her swoon, she learned that her husband still lived, though wounded, and in the power of the enemy; and after a few hours' retirement, she nerved herself to endure an interview with her conqueror.

It was in the coolest and loveliest hour of the day, when the land-breeze blew refreshingly from the hills, and the sun was sinking peacefully towards the horizon, that the immense gates of the Castell Nuovo were set open, its broad moat bridged for the adversary's tread, and the square before it filled with armed men. Durazzo himself first planted his foot on that bridge, but it was with a downcast eye. Then came on rank after rank of silent soldiery, following under the dark, massive archway, which, flanked with huge, round towers, seemed built to endure for

ages. As they entered the court and filed to the right and left, before them stood the small and half-starved garrison of Joanna, their visors up, and their ghastly countenances bearing dreadful testimony to the sufferings they had endured; while at every loophole, and at the doors of dark passages, were dimly seen innumerable faces of women and children still more emaciated with want. From the centre of the little group of soldiers advanced Luca di Battista, himself pale with fasting and sleepless nights, but with an aspect so haughty and stern, that, as he fixed his eyes on the approaching victor, they spoke the contempt which he felt in his soul; and an observer, ignorant of the truth, would have reversed the relative position of the two warriors. Di Battista might have been taken for the spirit of the fierce Charles of Anjou, the builder of the castle, rising from his grave in anger at the ingrate who came to rend her inheritance from his fair descendant. The step of Durazzo had lost its martial firmness; it was slow and unequal; he changed color every moment, and with a trembling hand, without looking him in the face, he received from Di Battista the massy keys of the fortress, and hastily delivered them to an officer, who was to be its commander.

This slight ceremony over, the troops of Durazzo were dispersed to their respective positions along the deserted walls, which soon bristled on every point with lances and spears; and the native humanity of Charles's disposition, chilled but not frozen by a self-

ish ambition, manifested itself in the next arrangement. Wagons, loaded with provision, came creaking through the gateway, and the sufferings of the famished were at an end. The chief seneschal of Joanna, with several of the officers usually in attendance on her person, then appeared, to conduct Durazzo to her presence. They had reached the spacious antechamber to her apartment, when the confessor of the prince, suddenly arriving at the Castell Nuovo, followed him without hesitation, and overtook him as he crossed its threshold. The monk had been absent for a few days, and had returned to Naples at the critical moment when the troops were marching into the fortress; and on learning that an interview was to take place between the conqueror and the conquered, he lost not a moment. Without staying to shake the dust of travel from his dress, he hurried unceremoniously through the knightly throng, that pressed towards the anteroom to catch a glimpse of a queen so celebrated; and, coming up with the prince as he entered the lofty apartment where Joanna had proposed to receive him, he laid his hand hastily on his arm. "My son! my son!" said he, "what are you doing? Did I not caution you? Did I not warn you?"

"I know it," replied Durazzo; "but how can I shrink from the presence of a woman? I would rather mount the scaffold than meet her eye; but she demands to see me, and on what plea can I refuse a boon so trifling?"

"Tush! folly, — folly!" ejaculated the priest; "step hither and hear me." He drew the prince aside, and, with earnest gestures and indefatigable perseverance, used every argument in his power to dissuade him from holding the purposed colloquy. He was but too eloquently aided by something in Durazzo's own bosom; who, conscience-stricken, and ashamed of the position in which he stood towards the queen, trembled as he entered the stately halls of the Angevins, and approached her on whom he was inflicting wrongs so base.

"It were better that we should not meet, I acknowledge," said he; "but now that I stand almost in her presence, — now that I have intruded on the sanctity of the royal apartments, and have warned her of my approach, — it were unknightly rudeness, methinks, and most unbecoming in a genérous conqueror, to turn from her, as with mere wanton caprice."

"Idle, boyish scruples!" exclaimed Father Matteo. "Said I not so? I knew that the very air she breathed would unman you; your brave knights will yet look on, with scornful smiles, to see their hero caught in the snares of this Jezebel. Go forth from these enchanted chambers, my son, if you are not already spellbound and nerveless, and leave me to deal with her who is your deadliest enemy. I will bring you her demands; her smooth accents and boasted eloquence will find another hearer than the purchaser of Avignon. I pray you have mercy on

yourself, my prince, and begone from these dangerous walls. The house of Anjou totters at your touch, but you may be crushed in its ruins, if you will not be counselled."

Perturbed and uncertain what course to pursue, still accustomed to be governed by the voice that addressed him so authoritatively, Charles actually turned to retire; when the double doors at the upper end of the hall were thrown open, and a dazzling vision presented itself. Joanna stood before him, in the centre of a sparkling semicircle of attendants; and she herself blazed forth in the full majesty of a queen. Either by chance or design, the dress she wore was similar to that in which he first saw her arrayed for some public occasion. Rich folds of drapery fell round her statue-like form with classic grace; its glossy, silken texture was wrought with flowers of gold; her girdle was composed of jewels; the crown, which rested lightly on her high forehead, glittered with diamonds and rubies; and her hands, folded on her breast, held a small, but exquisitely wrought crucifix, worthy the approaching days of Cellini. The lofty beauty of her countenance was almost unearthly; excitement glowed in her cheeks, and flushed from her sunken, but expressive eyes; and she looked all that she had been in the glory of her earlier days, when the gaze of a Petrarch delighted to dwell on one who realized a poet's dream of female loveliness, and the laughter-loving Boccaccio learned to reverence virtue in a form so fascinating. Years rolled

back; — the day, the hour, when that same resplendent form first stood before him, rose on the memory of Durazzo; and though the rosy lips of the apparition no longer wore the sweet, maternal smile, which then dispelled his boyish timidity, but greeted him with a cold, yet placid gravity, the present moment vanished completely in the gush of fond recollections. He stood thunderstruck an instant, and then, as he rushed forward and threw himself at the queen's feet, the tender appellation of other days, "My mother! my mother!" burst from his unconscious lips. The witnesses of a scene so unexpected remained hushed as death; the monk bit his nether lip, and with a countenance lurid with wrath turned away; the queen herself forgot her august composure, and as her lip trembled with a momentary emotion, she almost laid her hand kindly on the bent head of the prince; but suddenly recollecting herself, she drew back proudly. "I have wished to see you, Charles of Durazzo," she said, "but not thus. Rise, — for that posture little becomes the terms on which we meet."

Charles stood up, his cheeks burning with shame, and his eyes fixed on the ground; and with the same calm, sweet tone the queen proceeded. "You are my *master*, — by strength of arms you are so; but the crown of my ancestors is on my brows, and never, while I breathe, will I voluntarily place it on the head of — a usurper. He that wears it shall be worthy of it. This it was my pleasure that you should hear from my own lips."

The undaunted spirit of this declaration roused the pride of Charles for a moment, and retreating a few steps, he looked up boldly, but again cowered as he encountered the brilliant eye of Joanna fixed steadily upon him. He stammered a few words, and the queen bent her head forward to listen; but unable to express himself articulately, he looked towards his confessor. The monk met his embarrassed glance with a contemptuous smile, and the queen resumed, — "I ask of you the safety of my husband and my garrison. Priests, women, children, and a few brave men, once able to bear the weight of armour and skilful to use it, have clung to my fallen fortunes with an affection and fidelity that have touched my heart's core. I would not be *ungrateful*, — however I may be sunken in the world's eye; but a deposed queen has little grace to grant. I can plead for their lives and property with their conqueror and mine, — it is all I can do; and for that purpose I use the few brief moments of our interview. Is my petition granted?"

"It is," said Durazzo; "all, every thing you can ask. Try me farther. Demand any thing that I *can* perform, and prove whether I am as heartless and ungrateful as you deem me."

"Nay, I have but one favor more to ask; — an honorable prison, — à convent rather than a dungeon."

"Mother in heaven!" cried the prince; "a prison! Think you I am a brute, a monster? I would

smite the head from the shoulders of him who should speak of a prison for the person of my adored benefactress! Never, so help me Heaven! shall wrong or outrage approach you, while the son of your adoption wields a sword or draws the breath of life! No, most august Joanna. By divine injunction I receive the crown, which must pass from the house of Anjou; by the will of him who bears the keys of Heaven, and through whose mouth God himself speaks his sovereign pleasure to earthly princes, I claim the throne which you *must* vacate; but never, never, shall I forget the filial love of my boyhood; never shall I inflict one unnecessary pang upon the heart that opened to me in my desolation. You shall dwell with me in the castle, whose foundations were laid deep in the sea-shore by your warlike progenitor, and steadfast as those foundations you shall find the faith of Durazzo! Trust me, dearest mother; — give me back your love, your confidence. Abide with me with all the wonted splendors of your rank about you; cheer me in my troubles; aid me with your counsels; and though I may not bow the knee of a subject, I will pay the fondest homage of a son at your feet."

As the prince spoke, he again sunk on one knee, and attempted to raise the golden hem of her garment to his lips; but the queen withdrew it with dignity; and, as a slight expression of scorn passed over her face, she replied, — "This hour unfolds how little you know me, Durazzo; how ill you can

understand the true spirit of a born sovereign. I will not wrong you; I think not that you speak to mock and insult me, though a proposal so degrading quickens this pulse with an indignation you have not the soul to comprehend. You are bound by the laws of chivalry to respect me as a woman, and an oppressed one; and I do not hold you such a recreant, that you wilfully pour contumely on your prisoner. But I tell you, Charles of Durazzo, I will not look tamely on your usurpation. I will not walk about these halls like the eagle whose wings are clipped. I will be caged, or I will soar! Till my subjects forsake me to the last man, I will not forsake them, nor acquiesce in a mean compact, which transfers them to an unprincipled ruler." Charles started up, but the queen went on. "I know you, prince of Durazzo,— I know you now. Physical courage you have,— fearless and brave as a lion in the face of danger; but moral courage, the noblest gift of your race, you have not. You have some vague, unsettled sentiments of honor; but fixed principles you have not; and he who is the slave of blind impulse cannot rule a kingdom rightly."

"Urban thinks not so," said Durazzo; "he reads me better than she who trained me at her knee."

"Rememberest thou those days, Charles?" asked the queen, in a voice so soft and tremulous, and with a tone so melancholy, that the eyes of all present filled with tears. The prince shook; his heart swelled, and it was with difficulty he repressed the

impulse to burst forth once more into protestations of affection; but a sudden movement of the monk, who seemed about to interfere in the colloquy, checked him. "If the Head of the Church," he began, "if Urban himself ——"

"Name him not," interrupted Joanna; "he, too, is a usurper, and, himself born a subject of Naples, he may well preach treason. You well know, Durazzo, that I cleave to the cause of Clement, and look upon the Archbishop of Bari as one who has grasped the keys of St. Peter with a sacrilegious hand, and has made intrigue and sedition his stepping-stones to power which he abuses. You know that I gave shelter to the cardinals who fled from his tortures; that when the tiara was brought secretly to Fondi, I sent my ambassadors to witness the coronation of Robert of Savoy, to whom I bow as Clement the Seventh, the only lawful Father of the Church; and that I have thereby drawn on my head a fierce and unrelenting persecution. Urban, Charles, is my deadly enemy, — the enemy of my prosperity, my peace, my life, and my *reputation*. If my name goes down to posterity blackened with calumnies that make me shudder as I think of them, it is his hand that has given the mortal stab to my fame, — his influence that will live along the page of history, blighting the character of an injured and innocent woman, long after her bones have crumbled to dust. O Charles! that you should become the puppet of him who would crush me into the earth, —

who would drive me from the memory of the good, and shut out my soul from heaven, were that his prerogative! — that you, whom I once loved so tenderly, should become a thing I cannot respect, — a gilded toy-king I must despise!"

A hectic spot was now on the cheek of Durazzo; when Luca di Battista burst suddenly into the apartment, exclaiming, — "The laggard, craven slaves! I would a whirlwind met them now! Look there, my queen!" And as he spoke, the impetuous Baron threw back the lattice from a window near Joanna, which commanded a view of the bay. The whole lovely scene was bathed in the richest crimson glow of sunset; but the eye of the queen marked little of its beauty, for, full in view, ten French galleys came on, just rounding the promontory of Posilipo, and ploughing the golden waves, as they beat up bravely against the land-breeze, that almost baffled their progress. The queen stood dumb, gazing as if bewildered, and almost fancying it some optical illusion, conjured up by the sunbeams and evening vapors; then, sadly exclaiming, "Too late! too late!" she clasped her hands before her eyes to shut out a spectacle so glorious in itself, so cruel under existing circumstances, and sunk into a seat.

After some little conference with his officers and with Father Matteo, Charles respectfully approached the queen, whose spirits and fortitude seemed for a time to have given way. "I relieve you from my presence for to-day," said he, "but to-morrow, when

refreshed by sleep, you will perhaps admit me to a conference that may terminate more satisfactorily."

"I know not that," replied Joanna, somewhat impatiently; "but I would pray you one thing with all earnestness. Let not these tardy Frenchmen be harmed; let them go back in safety from their fruitless errand; and let me have one interview with them, that I may thank them for the good they purposed."

"It shall be so," replied Durazzo; "they shall be treated as my own guests; and to-morrow, if such be your pleasure, they shall be ushered into your presence."

"I would fain see them," replied the queen; "my destiny is sealed; and after to-morrow I would quit the Castell Nuovo."

The prince and his attendants left the apartment; and Joanna, worn out with fatigue and excitement, retired to solitude and tears.

CHAPTER X.

It was with unavailing consternation and regret, that the deputies from Provence learned whose was the banner floating so proudly on the tower San Martino; and that, had they reached the Bay of Naples but a few hours sooner, its unfortunate queen might

have been saved from a captivity as hopeless as unjust. Mournfully they entered her presence on the day after their arrival; but they were not permitted a private interview. Charles himself had gone to the Castello dell' Uovo, on the west side of the city, under whose wave-encircled walls the French fleet was moored. He had proposed to strengthen its fortifications, and, at the instigation of his confessor, had chosen this day to inspect it; but several of his officers attended the foreigners in their conference with the queen, and Father Matteo mingled unbidden with the train. It was his policy to keep the prince from all direct intercourse with a woman whose high spirit might soon be broken, and whose tender appeals to the better nature of Charles would then, he well knew, be irresistible; and he resolved, if possible, to be the medium of communication between them. He feared, indeed, that a single night's reflection on the actual position of her affairs might have humbled her into concessions which would satisfy the ambition of the prince; but the first glance at her regal brow, as he followed the French into her audience-chamber, satisfied him that he need dread no humility on her part, which would be dangerous to his schemes of vengeance. The treasures which she and her principal nobility had borne with them into the castle were still employed to support the splendor she deemed becoming her rank; for in that age, the genius of invention, newly awakened from a sleep of centuries, toiled diligently in the service

of luxury. The costly attire of the cardinals, who thronged around the wealthy Clement at the court of Avignon, would have purchased whole cities in the days of the ancient republics, though the anathemas of the Church of Rome were thundered against the vanities, not only of crowned heads and nobility, but of churchmen themselves. Joanna, a female, scarce emerging from childhood when she mounted the throne, had caught the spirit of the age. Her reign was the era of many inventions; one of her own subjects had bestowed the compass on the adventurous mariner; and the delicious climate of Naples, the attractions of its sovereign, and her liberality towards all worthy objects, drawing many distinguished foreigners to her court, it had been her delight to welcome them with a magnificence suited to her resources.

She now sat on a chair of state, raised three steps above the floor; a canopy of cloth of silver above her, and a blue velvet carpet, flowered with silver, covering the steps at her feet. Her own dress was simple, but costly, the single band of gold which confined her veil being enriched with the most precious gems, a cross of large rubies resting on her swan-like neck, and her black velvet robe delicately embroidered round the hem with vine-leaves and bunches of grapes in pearls. She was no longer flushed with feverish excitement, nor unnaturally pale; her eye had regained the calm, thoughtful expression it had worn for years, and no one who

looked at her would have believed her a queen but yesterday deposed. Her reception of the French noblemen, as they were severally introduced to her, was full of her accustomed sweetness and majesty; and one or two of them she recognized at once. "Noble Baron of Rocroi!" said she, "it is many, many years since we parted at Nice; we may almost count them by tens; yet it were not well to dwell on the events through which they have whirled us. It seems a dark, misty chaos, as I look back; but I joy to see your soldier-like frame unbent by time."

"These locks were hardly touched with silver, when your Majesty left your faithful subjects in Provence," said the old warrior, as he knelt to kiss her extended hand.

"No," replied Joanna; "but white as they now are, and worn upon the temples by the helmet, you see I cannot forget the hawk eye of Rocroi. And this youth, — his face is familiar, yet he could not have seen the light when we broke up our court to traverse the seas."

"It is the young De Lisle," replied the Baron de Rocroi, "who prayed earnestly to come on this expedition, that he might behold her of whom he has dreamed from his cradle."

"De Lisle!" repeated the queen sadly; "I loved your mother, young man; the beautiful Countess de Lisle was the pride and ornament of my French court. In her bridal days we walked together amid the shades of Vaucluse; and her tears fell fast when

we parted. It is her clear, olive complexion, and her animated smile, that you inherit. Did she bequeathe to you, also, her reverence for her sovereign, her sympathy for the oppressed?"

"She did, indeed," exclaimed the youth eagerly, half drawing his sword from the scabbard; "and I have thought nineteen summers too many over my head, before I brought my maiden blade into your Majesty's service."

"*One* day too many has indeed passed," said the queen, with a melancholy smile; "and now, my good and brave friends, — trusty, I doubt not, though dilatory, — how chanced this fatal delay? What adverse wind swept the Mediterranean, when the fate of Joanna hung on your speed?"

The Frenchmen looked downwards in silence; and it was some moments before the venerable Rocroi replied to her inquiry. "It is true that we were for many days wind-bound in the port of Marseilles; but, gracious queen, your cry for help came across the waters just when the death of the monarch had thrown the whole kingdom of France into confusion, and Louis of Anjou was straining every nerve to raise troops in his own defence. His regency was over, but tumult and bloodshed were about him, and, distracted by innumerable perplexities, he could not take measures in your behalf so promptly as his heart would have dictated."

The queen listened with attention to the defence of the worthy Baron, but paused before she an-

swered. A slight expression of doubt passed over her face, and leaning on the arm of her chair, she covered her eyes with her hand, as if willing to reflect on what she had heard. "Good Baron of Rocroi," said she at length, "you were wont to be highly esteemed as a man of no less sagacity and integrity than prowess; and such I do hold you. Tell me, then, are these the unvarnished facts? Is Louis of Anjou true in his heart, and worthy of my confidence?"

"He is!" exclaimed the old knight with energy. "I believe him a most honorable and high-minded prince; and that the evil star of Queen Joanna, which bade her summon his aid at the very conjuncture when he could not grant it, ruled him in this matter. Never, never, will *he* wrong or deceive you, most august queen; and I verily believe he will be smitten with the sorest anguish, when he learns how ill our errand hath sped. Men dreamed not that your danger was so imminent."

"I thank you for this assurance, worthy De Rocroi," replied the queen, with her former unclouded aspect; "I trust *you;* but who, — who can wonder, that a nature, once too confiding, hath long since become prone to distrust? Who can blame me, when so lately forced to rend an idol from my heart ——" She paused to recover herself, but it was only for an instant. "Now, most noble barons of Provence, I see around you men whose swords and hearts are pledged to the cause of Durazzo; I see Italians by

your side, who will listen to my words in the spirit of jealousy and hatred; yet in their presence will I speak boldly. You well know, that at the tender age of fifteen I came to the crown. What perils, what difficulties, what temptations, then surrounded me, no mortal man can know. It was not a day of vainglorious exultation; the tears of my regret fell on the grave of my venerable grandsire, and I trembled as I looked on the wild breakers amid which he had left me, though I knew not half their hidden dangers. My sex, my age, my rank, — those charms of which courtiers told me, now rapidly waning, — each and all brought their own trials. Yet men had no mercy on my youth and inexperience; they forgave not my errors; they forgot not my infirmities; they exaggerated my indiscretions. I had deadly foes and false friends, and my life has been a succession of calamities; my reign filled with hurricanes, both political and domestic, and slander has ever been busy with that which is dearer than life to the virtuous, — my good fame. Yet, noble barons, as truly as I now stand before you, a living, breathing, hapless woman, so truly does my conscience acquit me of aught that approaches crime; so truly have I striven to serve God and my fellow-creatures, in all innocence and uprightness. The enemies of my youth are in their graves; the sorrows of my earlier years have receded into the gloomy past; but where do I now stand? Let me declare to you, in the presence of yonder lowering Dominican, that I know

myself to be on the brink of a precipice, and I know whose fierce hostility hath driven me to it. I refused to acknowledge the unjust election of the Archbishop of Bari, — a bad man and a cruel one ; * and he hath denounced me, excommunicated me, tampered with the fidelity of my subjects, stolen from me the affections of the son I adopted, poisoned the sweet cup of domestic happiness, threatened me with ruin, and I am in his power. Think not that I speak boldly because unconscious of my danger. I behold with an undaunted eye the melancholy vista opening before me, — dethronement, imprisonment, a broken heart, a premature grave, and a blasted memory. He who can rend Christendom with a fatal schism, make the Church a double-headed monster that distracts the consciences of the pious, forget, in his selfish ambition and unhallowed strife, that the voice of the heretic, Wickliffe, cries scorn even from the shores of his own friendly England, — he, I say, will not hesitate to wreak his malice to the uttermost on a helpless female. Yet, knowing all these things, I do hereby protest, that no creature of

* " Alle sciagure da cui giaceva oppressa l' Italia, un' altra assai più grave se ne aggiunse nel funestissimo scisma, che per tanti anni divise e desolò miseramente la chiesa. Morto l' an. 1378 il pontef. Gregorio XI., che avea ricondotta a Roma la sede apostolica, ed eletto a succedergli, non senza qualche tumulto, Bartolomeo Prignani, Arcivescovo di Bari, che prese il nome di Urbano VI., questi, colla eccessiva sua severità, fece ben presto pentire più cardinali, e i Francesi singolarmente, della elezione che aveano fatta." — TIRABOSCHI, Tomo V., p. 14.

his shall ever mount the throne of Naples while I have breath wherewith to oppose it, nor while the solemn voice of the dead can forbid it. I do hereby revoke the declaration I once made in favor of Charles of Durazzo, my adopted son and intended heir, declaring that his base subserviency to the designs of Rome, his impatient ambition and black ingratitude, have forfeited my confidence and my affection. And I do hereby transfer all my dominions in France and Italy, after my decease, to Louis of Anjou, late Regent of France, declaring him my sole lawful heir, and conjuring him to assert and make good his claim to rule my beloved people. As a pledge and memorial of my sincerity, worthy Baron de Rocroi, I call all present to witness that I deliver into your hands this document, — the last will and testament of Joanna of Naples; wherein the intentions I have so distinctly expressed are fulfilled. And now, kind and true friends, I would bid God speed you back to dear, happy Provence. Begone, while the sea is calm, and before the hand of the spoiler is outstretched; for the purposes of unjust men are more unsteady than the winds or waves. As for the disinherited Charles, I loved him like a true woman, faithfully, trustingly, to the last. I could not, would not, believe him false till his own hand rent the bandage from my eyes; and even now I hate him not. I pity him, my friends, I pity him; for with agony of soul will he yet atone for the undeserved suffering with which he has wrung this heart. Yet, —

mark me, — if ever you are told hereafter that I have admitted his unjust claims, believe it not; even if they place before you an act signed by my hand, regard it as false, or extorted from me by fraud or violence; — believe it not; — believe not your own eyes; — believe nothing but these tears which I shed before you, and avenge them!"

The queen descended two steps, and delivered the roll of parchment into the hands of the Baron de Rocroi, who received it on his knee. He then rose, drew his sword, the other noblemen followed the example, and their manly voices rang through the hall, as they solemnly renewed their oaths of allegiance to their persecuted sovereign. This ceremony over, he approached to take a sad, respectful leave of Joanna, and kiss her unsceptred hand. She bade them a kind farewell, and as they passed silently, one by one, from her presence, the tones of that most touching voice yet ringing in their ears, unwonted tears rolled down their cheeks.

From the moment that the Baron de Rocroi had ascertained the state of affairs in Naples, he had resolved not to linger a day near its treacherous shores. The crews of his fleet had been permitted to land only to take in a supply of fresh water, at which employment they had toiled through the night and cool morning, and he had promptly demanded a safe-conduct from Charles, which that prince had as readily granted, under the influence of his recent interview with Joanna. From her presence, therefore, the

French chiefs returned to their ships, and prepared to sail as soon as the afternoon *vento di terra* should fill their canvas.

In the mean time, Father Matteo, with equal despatch, had gone in pursuit of Durazzo, burning to communicate the intelligence of the queen's proceedings, and to seize the moment for striking an important blow. Before he reached the Castello dell' Uovo, however, Charles had left it. Restless and unhappy, the victor of yesterday had wandered from place to place; and as he galloped with a small party of attendants to various parts of the city, under different pretexts, the perturbation of his mind was visible in his absent air and troubled countenance. It was not till the afternoon that the monk overtook him, just as he had returned to the Castello dell' Uovo, and stood on its battlements, watching the French galleys as they went down the harbour with a prosperous breeze, filling every inch of their white sails.

"There they go!" said Durazzo, with a forced smile; "the officious intruders are glad to make us but a twenty-four hours' visit, and back they speed to gay France. If our last tidings be true, Anjou will find work enough for their ready blades on his own soil, without sending them to bluster in a woman's cause. I would he had despatched a few old minstrels and troubadours, to cheer us in these anxious days; we would have shown them some royal courtesy."

"You have shown yon knaves more courtesy than beseems your interests, my son," said the monk, bitterly; "but their safe-conduct would have availed them little, could I have traced you some hours sooner; it is too late now. You have sown the seeds of your own torment."

"What mean you?" exclaimed the prince.

"I mean, that the mischievous and malignant woman whom you handle so gently has prepared strife for your companion these many years! Yonder fleet galleys carry with them that which shall bring upon you fresh enemies, increasing difficulties, and unceasing warfare! Know you not, — can you not guess, what precious document they transport to the hands of Anjou?"

Charles's countenance fell, but he stood mute.

"I tell you," continued the monk, "the last solemn will of Joanna is in that bark, which leads the van so proudly. It makes Louis of Anjou her heir, and consequently bequeathes to you a goodly inheritance of strife and bloodshed. Inch by inch will you be forced to contend for these fair possessions, with the chance that at last the hand of your French competitor may rend the crown from your brows, so lately placed there by Urban himself. You came from Rome a newly made king; you may be driven back to it a hunted fugitive. These are the loving acts of Joanna towards you!"

"Have I deserved aught better at her hands?" asked Durazzo, turning deadly pale. "And yet, —

that she should make him her heir! How could I anticipate such a step?"

"Back, back to Venice!" said the monk; "there you were a man and a warrior. Your friends of Genoa have need of you; for men say that an aged magician hath brought up fire from hell to serve those desperate Venetians, and that with smoke and red flashes he rains down balls of iron upon the Genoese fleet.* Go back to Venice, my son; think no more of fair Naples and its rich sovereignty; and as you pass through Rome, stay only to render account to Urban of the massy church plate that he melted down, to hire fresh troops against this disobedient woman. Tell him you are no match for her wiles; that you have not the spirit to curb her; that you have made her your prisoner, and dare not treat her as such. Tell him that she taunts and insults you to your face, and speaks of you with contemptuous pity; yet goes free, and, with mingled craft and haughtiness, lays her machinations for your

* "We may say, this was the most cruell warre that vntill that time euer was seen in the world: for, therein was artillery first of all vsed by the Venecians; which was about the yeer of our Lord one thousand three hundred, eighty two, or a little while after. The inuention of this pestilent scourge of mankinde was attributed to the Germanes: some say that a Monk, who was a great Philosopher, found out the same; not to that purpose to haue killed and slain men therewith, but with a desire to haue experimented the quality and naturall force of things. Others are of opinion, that it was one *Peter*, a great Magician: but it importeth little to knowe who it was; for besides the ordinary Historiographers which I follow in this place, ther be many others write thereof."—GRYMESTONE's *Imperiall History*.

future ruin unmolested. O blindness and infatuation most inconceivable! Well may rumor whisper that she, too, deals in a dark, unhallowed science, which gives her more than human power."

"What would you have me do?" asked the perplexed and wavering Charles.

His ghostly father gazed steadfastly on his countenance, so full of woe and uncertainty, and then, looking round at the page of Charles and other attendants, who stood almost within hearing, he sunk his voice to a stern whisper, and said, — "It was but yesterday you threatened to smite the head from the shoulders of him who should speak of a prison for Joanna, yet I dare do it."

The prince started, and, striking his hand against his forehead, turned from the monk abruptly, and strode away. Father Matteo looked after him earnestly, and said to himself, — "Ay, start at first! then look askance at the matter once more, — ponder, — become familiar with its aspect, and brood over it, till reluctance vanishes, and you plunge forward with a blindfold desperation. I have her closely immured; I am as sure of it as if I looked through the grated window of her prison."

Durazzo left the battlements instantly; but it was to return to his quarters in the city, where he shut himself up in his apartment for two hours. At the expiration of that time, Father Matteo was summoned, as he had anticipated. The door was again closed, and their fearful conference protracted till the purple twilight descended over land and sea.

CHAPTER XI.

In the mean time a message came from Joanna, requesting permission to visit her wounded husband. It met with a prompt refusal. Another arrived, demanding an interview with Durazzo himself. That, too, was refused. It was her heart's desire to solicit the return of her beloved niece, that she might have the consolation of a visit from her in some neighbouring convent; but, indignant at the harsh incivility with which her requests were met, and judging rightly that it boded ill, she forbore to molest her conqueror farther that night.

As the evening waned, no sleep sat heavy on her eyelids. She dismissed her weary attendants, and placed herself alone at a window of her chamber. The air was peculiarly still and sultry, the sky hazy, and the stars shone with a dim, reddish lustre, as if looking sadly down on a world where they witnessed so much sin and suffering. The monotonous sounds of the waves, continually washing against the castle walls, harmonized with the dejected state of the queen's mind. She had observed that her own guard had been withdrawn, and sentinels substituted from the ranks of those fierce, hireling mountaineers, by whose aid Charles had spread dismay in Naples. She felt herself a prisoner; and, leaning out from her casement, looked wishfully down to some gar-

dens beyond the fortress, whose myrtle-groves and pleasant walks reached to the water's edge. There, indeed, an illumination, like the work of fairies, caught her attention for a few moments, as those glittering insects, which light up the summer evenings of Italy, flitted in myriads among the trees, emitting and concealing their silvery light with the regularity of machinery. The laugh of the thoughtless Neapolitans, who strolled in search of coolness at that late hour, came up occasionally to her ear; and she smothered a sigh as she thought, — "Yes, there is brightness, there is joy yet in the world, though not for me. Are my sorrows so selfish that the thought cannot soothe their anguish? O, no! Charles! Charles! the parental heart mourning over the misconduct of the being it condemns and loves at once, cannot be selfish; and mine are the pangs of a disappointed mother. Little dost thou dream of them; deep and secret are the fountains of these gushing tears. My people, too; beloved, unhappy people! what horrors of misrule await ye! The heartless usurper must needs be a tyrant; he cannot, he will not, study your welfare as I have done; and the wealth that should be the handmaiden of religion, charity, and the people's good, will be wasted in bloody, ambitious wars, wherein ye have no concern. He cannot rejoice in the quiet arts of peace, with a guilty conscience for ever struggling in his bosom; and unrighteous contention must be the element in which such troubled spirits move. O

my son, my unhappy boy! my wretched people! my forlorn and suffering husband!"

Forgetting thus the gloom of her own personal situation in the sad prospects of those she loved, Joanna yielded in the solitude of night to that sorrow which before the face of man she would have magnanimously suppressed; and laying down her head on the edge of the window, she wept freely. She was unconscious how the hours passed, for the abstraction of utter affliction sometimes, like that of happiness, makes us forgetful of time. It was long past midnight, however, and repose at last seemed to have settled upon that populous and most restless city, when its stillness was invaded by a strange and awful sound. The queen raised her head suddenly and listened. It was a low, subterranean rumbling, as if a thousand chariots were driven through vaults far beneath the castle, jarring the whole massy fabric; and as it approached from the west, and died solemnly away, her heart seemed to cease beating. It was hushed by awe, not terror; she knew the voice of the earthquake, which had spoken forth its deep accents not unfrequently during her reign, but seldom excited alarm, because unattended by serious consequences. It had only reminded the thoughtful, that though they dwelt under the bluest of skies, amid balmy breezes, with a soil beneath their feet so fertile that the whole country was a garden, yet that that soil was but a crust over a vast fiery abyss; a fact to which, everywhere, the black lavas of former

calamity bore fearful testimony, and the craters of extinct volcanoes, visible at so many distinct localities, gave also their witness. The shock which had roused the queen was not a severe one, and amid the innumerable noises of busy day might have passed unnoticed; but as she rose, she involuntarily looked towards Vesuvius. The mountain stood calm, silent, and majestic beneath the starlight; the long sleep of its fires was not yet broken. She remembered that, in the beginning of the century, the volcano in the isle of Ischia had been active; and though its lofty summit was hid by intervening objects, she turned to that quarter, half expecting to see the heavens glowing with the reflection of the red eruption; but there, too, the skies shone with their wonted lights alone. It might have been produced by the distant operations of Stromboli, which, as she well knew, had been in a state of activity from time immemorial. But the current of the queen's sad thoughts was now broken, and she gave herself up to those reflections on the omnipotence of the Almighty, which, to intellects of a high order, are so absorbing.

Lost in sublime reverie, she lingered at the casement without a thought of retiring; when another interruption called back her spirit from its musings. The red light of a torch appeared flaring among the trees, in one of the neighbouring gardens already mentioned; and presently its bearer, evidently a stripling from the slightness of his figure, emerged from the shrubbery which fringed the turfy margin

of the shore, and wandered along as if searching for something. He soon reached a cypress, whose drooping branches swept the water, and, loosing a small skiff which was secured to its trunk, sprang in, pushed off, and plunged his flambeau into the sea. Its sudden extinction seemed to leave a total darkness behind; and the queen, after listening some time in vain, was preparing to leave the window, when the dash of an oar caught her ear. She leaned out again, and was convinced that the boatman was approaching under the castle walls with great caution; and in a few moments more he shot forth from their shadow, apparently satisfied that no sentinels were stationed along the water side of the fortress; and as the small bark glided silently on the dark waters opposite her window, she perceived that he stood up and made signs to her. Once she thought he raised his arms as if about to draw a bow; but through the shades of night it was impossible to distinguish his gestures clearly. Aware that she herself was conspicuous at the window of a lighted apartment, she was persuaded that the stranger must probably recognize her person, and propose to hold conference with her; but it was not till after watching some time intently that she perceived he was making signs for her to withdraw. She did so; and the next instant an arrow came whizzing past her, and, penetrating the oaken wainscoting of her apartment opposite the casement, remained quivering in the wood. Startled and amazed, she looked out again; the youth

and his boat were skimming the waves swiftly, and were soon lost in the gloom of night, once more leaving her in utter perplexity. On approaching the arrow, she found a slip of linen paper attached to it; and the following words solved the mystery.

"Most gracious Queen,—

"A secret and deadly foe plots your destruction, and rules the conscience of my poor master. They have held a conference to-night. I know its result, and have striven to rescue you. I have even bribed the rude Hungarian captain of your guard; but when I came to claim admission, scarce an hour since, for the purpose of withdrawing you secretly to a place of safety, I found him trembling with superstitious terrors. The earthquake seemed to him a warning against the betrayal of his trust, and I was forced to retire and seek some method to warn you of your danger. They will come to you with propositions this night; *seem* to yield, noble sovereign, or you will be hurried beyond the reach of aid. Gain time; and by to-morrow night abler heads may plot, and abler hands accomplish, your flight.

"GIOVANNI DEL MONTE."

"The page of Charles!" exclaimed Joanna to herself. "Strange, strange are the chances of this world! The evil for which we were prepared comes not, but sorrow lights upon us from some other quarter; and so, too, the staff we lean on breaks, and

help is extended by a stranger's hand! Durazzo is my enemy, and takes counsel with the emissaries of Urban; this unknown, humble boy rises up to comfort and protect a crowned queen! Noble youth, I will not peril thee. Thou shalt not entwine the thread of thy destiny with that of my dark and tangled fate, nor mingle in schemes that might bring thee to an early and bloody grave. I will use no artifice; I will ask no delay; I will face all dangers bravely, which threaten me alone."

So saying, the high-minded queen tore the paper into small pieces, and cast them from the window. As she stood, with the arrow yet in her hand, uncertain how to dispose of it, a noise within the castle broke on the universal stillness. It approached; doors opened, and heavy feet came trampling on, along the marble floors. Shrieks from the anteroom were then heard, and two of her female attendants who slept there burst into her apartments with disheveled hair, and clung to her, looking back with wild terror. The queen, not entirely unprepared for this scene, stood motionless, as an armed knight presented himself on the threshold, apparently uncertain whether to advance. On seeing, however, that the queen had not yet retired, but was standing, completely dressed, beneath the antique golden lamp suspended from the centre of her apartment, he stepped into the room with an air of deep respect. Behind him, in the doorway, appeared the grim faces of several Hungarian soldiers; and as the knight looked

back impatiently, the cowled head of a monk presented itself also. The quick eye of Joanna discerned it, though in the dim background; and finding that the foremost intruder still hesitated, she said calmly, "I pray you, sir knight, approach, and summon hither the rest of your party, that I may know to whom I am indebted for a visit so well timed and courteous. How! The Baron di Castiglione! — a brave and honorable knight, as I have been wont to think him! — and in his company the dark-robed, lowering Dominican I marked to-day, and a band of foreign ruffians! Pleasant and fitting guests to enter a queen's chamber at this dead hour! It is well that sorrow keeps vigils, or you might have chased gay dreams from my pillow. May I ask what midnight work hath been assigned you by your noble master?"

"Most august princess," began the Baron; but Joanna interrupted him: — "Nay, spare the courtesy of soft words, good Baron, when the deeds are so rough."

The monk now came forward, planted himself before the queen, threw back the cowl from his forehead, and fixing his sternest glance upon her, said, in a harsh, imperious tone, — "We come from Charles the Third, king of Naples, your sovereign and ours; and the business that brings us is of import too pressing to wait for daylight."

The queen bowed her head slightly and said, — "I know whom you mean to designate by these titles. What is your master's pleasure?"

"That you sign this document," returned the monk abruptly, extending to her a scroll.

Joanna took it, cast her eye over it carelessly, and dropping it on the floor, placed her foot upon it. Then drawing her proud figure up to its full height, she inquired, — "Is this all? Know you not that my declaration to the barons of Provence renders all recantation useless? You were present at the interview; you heard my words. You were aware it would be an idle form to subscribe this worthless document; men would know it to have been extorted from me. Shame on Charles to palter thus! What else doth he demand?"

"That you promise to attend the meeting of Italian nobles he will summon to-morrow, and there formally and publicly disclaim your proceedings of this morning, acknowledging yourself possessed of no right to wear or bequeathe the crown of these realms."

"Hath Charles the shadow of an expectation that I shall so far loose my reason? Tell him that if I obey his summons, it shall be to his sorrow; that if I come before the nobles of my country, it shall be to declare my rights, to protest against his injustice and iniquity, to rouse the loyalty and chivalry which are sleeping, not dead, in the bosoms of belted knights. I will not deceive him. It would be my heart's wish to meet him face to face before the world, and make a solemn appeal to God and mankind. These wan cheeks, the accents of truth and injured innocence,

his own accusing conscience and inward shame, would give me a power over the hearts of my hearers, that would reseat me on the throne of my ancestors. He knows it; he dares not trust me with such opportunity; he has no thought of it, and the mockery covers some further meditated wrong. What more?"

"The alternative," said the Baron, in a low voice to Father Matteo; "tell her the alternative at once."

"There is an alternative, then?" asked the queen, with some eagerness.

"A prison in the Apennines," was the stern reply of the monk.

Joanna involuntarily uttered an ejaculation of dismay, and a brief pause succeeded; then, folding her arms across her breast, and bowing her head, she said composedly, "I choose it."

"Most noble Joanna," exclaimed the Baron di Castiglione, "think well, I conjure you. What boots vain resistance? Why struggle with power that must overmaster all opposition? Bend, while the storm goes by."

"Never! The reed in the valley may bend and escape destruction, but the pine on the mountain must break. The storm will not pass while Joanna cumbers the earth, unless the heart of the ambitious man again become that of a child, and he put away evil counsellors, that foster his ruling passions. Few, very few of my own nobles has he bribed or subdued; those who are true to me shall never blush

for the womanly faintheartedness of Joanna, nor say that she set them the example of subserviency. I reign in the hearts of my people; and therefore it is that these hollow propositions are sent to me in haste and secrecy, that night may cover the approaching crime. Should he drag me a prisoner through the streets of Naples, beneath open day ——"

"Time wears!" interrupted Father Matteo; "our messages are spoken, and her choice is made. Baron di Castiglione, she is your charge."

"Nay," said the Baron; "the business is too weighty for such unseemly despatch. Decide not so hastily, lady; the castles of the mountains are dreary abodes; and she who has reigned in the most luxurious court of Europe dreams not of the lonely, comfortless, heart-breaking hours that await her."

"Good Baron," said the queen, "I read in your eye the respectful compassion that my situation claims, and I thank you for it. Pity not me, however; pity rather your own deluded master. My choice is hasty, not rash. There are emergencies in life when thought rushes with unwonted rapidity through the brain, and the soul distinguishes right from wrong with the lightning glance of intuition. My principles have been years in forming; their operation is instantaneous. Bear me to my quiet prison; and believe not that Charles will be happier on a usurped throne, than I in my unjust confinement. Holy Father, tell him that, as I have bequeathed to Louis of Anjou my dominions, to him I send this

arrow; — so keen, so barbed, shall be the thought of Joanna in his bosom. I am ready. Is it not the prince's pleasure that we set forth to-night?"

"It is so," answered the monk; "and every arrangement is made."

"Ay," said Joanna, "it was wisely done; the result of this visit was easily foreseen. My women, — are they not to accompany me?"

"Not one."

The queen changed countenance; and the cries of her attendants again broke forth at this harsh prohibition. "It is well," said Joanna, recovering her self-possession; "I would not have my poor maidens share my unkind fortunes, though the tenderness of my own sex, and the sympathy of those who loved me, might have poured one drop of sweetness into the bitter cup. Farewell, my faithful friends! Pray for me. It would have been difficult to break my heart, if cheered in adversity by your affection, therefore you must stay. May you find no harsher mistress than I have been! Go to Margaret of Durazzo. They tell me she lies on a sick bed at Rome, but I know that my sweet niece is true to me yet. Carry her my blessing, and say, that could I have looked once more on her beloved face —— Lead forward, good Baron! it is no hour for tears!"

So saying, the queen disengaged herself from the weeping women, who still clung round her person, wrapped herself in a large mantle and veil, and refusing to listen to further expostulation from Di Casti-

glione, followed the monk with a firm step from the apartment.

Lighted by torches, the party went down to the vaults of the castle, and proceeding through damp passages, which the sunbeam had never reached, and whose solid masonry seemed to defy time and violence, they emerged from the very foundations of the building at the water's edge. A large boat, well manned, was in waiting; and in a few moments more the queen found herself bounding over the waves that bore her from a palace to a prison. The boatmen pulled vigorously, and as their course was due south, in less than two hours she was in the centre of that celebrated bay, the billows leaping about her with the white foam cresting their summits, as the night breeze swept over them; the glorious amphitheatre of lovely and classic hills rising indistinctly round nearly the whole horizon, — the heights of Capri and Ana-Capri, with their neighbouring promontory before her, becoming every moment loftier to the eye; Vesuvius on her left, calmly overlooking the whole region like a queen; and far, far behind her, Naples, buried in repose and darkness, as it lay on the gracefully sweeping northern shore, its situation marked only by a few twinkling lights.

It was long after daybreak when the party landed on the rocks, not far from Sorrento, near a spot afterwards chosen by the Jesuits for the convent of La Cocomella; and here a small troop of horse awaited them. In silence the queen mounted, and without

casting a glance toward the noble relics of antiquity which grace these shores, then far more perfect than the wandering antiquary of these days beholds them, she rode in the centre of her guards along the fine road, now covered by the encroaching waves. Avoiding the populous town, the Baron led the way at full speed across the fertile plain of Sorrento, where all the fruits of summer clustered upon vine and bough over their heads; and the peasantry, coming forth to their morning labor, greeted them cheerfully as they passed, little dreaming, while the glittering party swept by, that their beautiful and unfortunate queen rode there a disconsolate prisoner.

When they had ascended the first ridge of the mountains that approached the coast, Joanna profited by a momentary halt to look back; but the vast and magnificent prospect that lay below only called up agonizing remembrances. The remains of a noble Roman aqueduct, striding across the plain with its lofty arches; the white villages and gray ruins; groves of every shade of green; capes, islands, and the silver sea beyond all, fair in themselves, and hallowed by a thousand associations, were stretched forth under a cloudless sky and bright morning sun, that seemed to rejoice in the beauty he beheld; and her heart yearned over the whole region with a mournful presentiment that she should never more be gladdened by its loveliness, nor minister to the happiness of its population. On they went again, down the steep declivity; the whole fairy scene was

shut from view, and eastward, before them, extended the green Campagna, to the foot of the eternal Apennines, rising in gloomy majesty to the very skies.

Towards the close of the next day, they paused near a monastery at the very base of the mountains. A tremendous pass opened before them, leading into wild, untrodden recesses, from whose depths a torrent came rushing down to the plains. The cliffs which overhung the valley, sometimes gray and bare, sometimes shaggy with ancient forests of larch and pine, seemed to the inexperienced eye completely inaccessible; but far up among the crags, and perched on the very verge of a precipice, the turrets of a solitary fortress caught the rays of the setting sun. The evening mist already crept sluggishly along the stream winding in front of the monastery, and as the queen watched the illumination of the loftier and more distant mountain peaks, visible above all nearer objects, the Baron di Castiglione approached her, and, with a countenance full of sad meaning, pointed to the lonely castle, uttering the words, "Il Muro." Joanna shuddered as she looked up earnestly at her future prison, but made no reply. Impatient to traverse their dangerous road before nightfall, the Baron allowed but a short halt at the monastery; yet while they pressed up the perilous ascent, the glowing west faded gradually away; the gloom of mighty forests hung over them; and Joanna felt that she was passing through toil and danger to a region beyond the

reach of succour. More than once their road lay along the side of the mountain, which rose like a wall on one hand, while on the other yawned a tremendous chasm; and the rude bridges, thrown by the mountaineers over the dashing waterfalls, shook at every step beneath their horses' feet. At last they stood in safety before the barbican of the Castle Muro. A blast of the horn, as in days of yet more ancient romance, was succeeded by deathlike stillness; and then the mountain solitudes rang back the unfrequent sound with their clear, sweet echoes. Rude and dark were the towers which rose against the sky; and presently red torch-light flashed through their few windows. Bewildered and almost stupefied by the strangeness of her situation, Joanna was scarcely conscious when the gates were thrown open; and she crossed the drawbridge, the outer court, and was passing under the heavy gateway of the inner wall, when the harsh clang of the external gate, as it closed behind her, shutting out the world and all it held dear, smote on her heart like a death-knell. Then, indeed, the iron entered her soul; and the words "God help me!" escaped her with a deep groan, as the captive queen, amid a throng of wild, banditti-like soldiery, placed her foot on the threshold of her prison.

CHAPTER XII.

It were vain to attempt details of the trial which now fell upon the persecuted Joanna. The weary monotony of a prisoner's day may be conceived; but how very weary its unoccupied hours became to her, whose life had been devoted to constant and high employment, full of variety, full of incident, cannot be described. Her imprisonment was, in one sense of the word, solitary; for though two or three females attended her to perform menial offices, and the commander of the garrison had access to her presence, she found them rough and ignorant almost to barbarism; and the loneliness of the heart and intellect was total; the affections of the one, the cultivation of the other, for a time seemed wasted. The world was not then flooded with books, and none were sent to beguile the irksomeness of her existence. By a refinement of inhumanity, idleness was made part of the discipline intended to break her spirits. Thrown on the resources alone of her own mind, she found memory for ever busy with the past, calling up its checkered scenes with cruel fidelity; while hope shrank away, because the future had no bright spot to which she could point with her angel smile. The suddenness of the transition at first stunned and benumbed the queen's energies; and there were hours when she felt that incessant mus-

ing, still thinking and thinking, without the slightest interruption to reflections so engrossing and bitter, would almost drive her to distraction. But hers was not a mind to be thus unhinged and shattered; and though there was nothing in her situation which she could grasp at and convert into happiness, she sought refuge from madness in pursuits that could have claimed slight interest under other circumstances.

The love of nature, ever strongest in the most finely developed characters, did, indeed, sometimes win her from sorrowful contemplations, as she looked from her lofty turret window on the rugged, mountain scenery about the Castle Muro, and watched the effects of ever-changing lights and shadows on the same immutable objects. It seemed to her that the mere creation of clouds alone had filled the world with variety, and given to the broad skies perpetual novelty with their ever-shifting scenery; while the mountain peaks, sometimes shrouded in mists, sometimes glittering in sunshine, seemed almost to lose their identity, so different was the aspect they wore under various states of the atmosphere. One window of her turret looked down the pass, and commanded a distant view of green fields, smiling like some calm, remote Elysium; the other opened to the east a prospect as rough and savage, as if formed only for the abode of the mountain blast, the torrent, and the wild bandit. Thence came the frequent hurricane, roaring fearfully as it passed down the gorge,

and tearing up the young pines by the roots; while the aged trunks, that had withstood the storms of centuries, rocked with all their mighty branches in the gale. There, too, in the summer mornings, she watched the timid ibex, that inhabitant of earth's upper regions, tossing her fantastically twisted horns, as she glided along the edge of some aerial cliff, or led her young to drink of the brooks that gleamed through the trees. The autumn saddened around her at last; and one morning she looked forth, and the mountain-tops were white with snow. Then came on the horrors of the long, long winter. Its inclemencies reached her; the fierce music of its storms howled round her lofty dwelling, as she lay thinking of the absent; and apparently forgotten both by friend and foe, she suffered on for months, silently and patiently, hoping that the frail dust which held her spirit in such bondage would at length dissolve, and that the wild-flowers of the mountains would blossom, with the breath of spring, upon her grave.

Strong as her mind was by nature, it had derived fresh strength from the development of the religious principle, during her hours of solitary reflection, where God spoke to her through his sublimest works; and all idle forms and pomps, devised by man, came no longer between her soul and its Maker. The purest exercises of devotion, in which her spirit addressed itself spontaneously to the Best of beings for protection and support, had become familiar to her mind; and without a thought of heresy,

her faith had been ripened by circumstances, and was in advance of the age in which she lived. The tenets of Lollardism had indeed reached her ear; but it was her own vigorous reason that had thus taught her to improve her unsought opportunities of meditation. In those moments of weakness and despondency, to which human nature is ever liable, — when the faces she best loved haunted her waking dreams, until homesickness seemed to melt her very soul, — then came, too, that consoling confidence in Infinite Goodness, which had been born of wise reflections on past events. Happy are those to whom a pause in life's bustle is allowed, that they may ruminate and learn for themselves how various are the garbs which mercy wears, how inexhaustible the resources against sorrow which are granted in the privilege of addressing ourselves to our Father in heaven. The heart of the Catholic queen became filled in her solitude with the piety expressed in these later days from a New England pulpit, with such beautiful simplicity, — "Can he murmur who can pray?"

As the spring opened, more than one haughty message from Durazzo broke upon her solitude, demanding written concessions and acknowledgments, which her sense of duty still forbade; and she refused compliance in a tone of calm dignity, and with an imperturbable sweetness of manner, which astonished and melted his ambassadors. No murmur or reproaches escaped her lips; no petitions for relief mo-

lested her conqueror; no vehemence marked her deportment. Resignation, not sullenness, was in that tranquil air; and though her aspect showed that she had suffered, those who held intercourse with her by the command of Durazzo left her with a feeling of deep, involuntary reverence for one who seemed exalted rather than crushed by earthly calamity.

In the mean time a winter of wretchedness had passed over the usurper's head. Opposition and difficulty had met him at every turn. The crown sat uneasy on his brows; for not one moment of peace had his bosom known, since the coveted prize had been won. Continually in arms against the enraged nobility of the kingdom, who, with few exceptions, had embraced the cause of Joanna, — harassed by the demands of Urban, who imperiously claimed the promised domains of Capua for his nephew, which it was out of his power to bestow, — shut out from domestic enjoyment by the illness of his wife at Rome, and the unsettled state of his affairs, — domineered over by his confessor, who had ascertained the weak points of his character, and, made insolent by success, played on his ambition, his superstition, and his impetuosity with masterly skill, — Charles became daily more eager for power, more reckless of the means by which it might be gained, more remorseless as he looked back on the steps already taken. The gentler traits of his moral constitution were obliterated, one by one, as he rushed along his downward and bloody career. His cheerfulness van-

ished; his temper became soured; his heart grew heavy and cold, and the open smile of his earlier and better days was gone for ever from his countenance. Unable to shake off the irritating consciousness of his guilt, yet panting still for its fruits, the gallant Prince of Durazzo was fast becoming the selfish, relentless tyrant. So the opening spring of 1383 found the conqueror of Joanna.

It was early in the month of April, that Francis Prignano, or Butillo, as he is styled by some historians, the nephew of Urban, returned to Rome, after a long excursion, and accidentally learned that the Princess of Durazzo yet lay there, the victim of some lingering malady. The threat of his cruel relative flashed on his recollection, and a feeling of compassion for the youthful sufferer stirred his heart. Urban was absent from the city, and the opportunity was not to be lost. A secret intimation was conveyed to the princess's trusty attendants; the prescriptions of the Pope's physicians were neglected, and before the return of his Holiness, the evident amendment in the strength of the princess allowed them to transport her privately from his dominions, and she was conveyed to the genial atmosphere of Baiæ. Here her health rapidly improved.

It was at this period that the aged and palsy-stricken Wickliffe was lifting up a voice from his retirement at Lutterworth, which rung more clearly through Christendom as the hour approached which was to hush its accents for ever; and this, too, was

the year in which the hot-headed young Henry Spencer, Bishop of Norwich, undertook his mad crusade in favor of Urban against the Lollards in Flanders; while the schism which so fatally degraded the dignity and lessened the power of the Catholic Church went on fiercely, and the Pope of Rome, engrossed with so many other cares, had no leisure to think of protracting the separation of Margaret from her husband. Father Matteo rejoiced that, while Charles was fighting in the southern part of his dominions, against rebellious barons, she was not likely to seek him; and she, thus overlooked in her hours of convalescence, unceasingly laid fond plans to reclaim her unhappy lord to the paths of honor, duty, and virtue; so hard is it for woman to credit the utter extinction of good principles in the heart she has prized; so true is it, that the veriest reprobate may find in the bosom of mother or wife something that still hopes and pleads, when all mankind beside may have delivered him over to his sins and their consequences!

The tumultuous state of the country kept her for some time inactive; but at last tidings reached her, that Durazzo had been defeated in a severe skirmish among the Calabrian wilds, and was about to return to Naples. She determined to set forth without delay, and, accompanied by a strong escort, to meet him near the mountains which encircled the Castle Muro. In this hour of defeat and discouragement, she trusted that an appeal to his reason and his heart, in the

very neighbourhood of his august captive, might unbar the gates of that prison, give back their queen to a distracted people, restore peace to her husband, and long-forgotten happiness to herself.

The gloom of twilight was fast obscuring the landscape round the monastery of Santa Maria, on the evening of May the twenty-first, when the dispirited and weary troops of Durazzo came filing through the mountains south of the plain. They were to halt for the night near the base of those cliffs which were crowned by the gray turrets of Il Muro; and Charles, acquainted with the localities of these regions, approached to take possession of the quiet little monastery, which stood in the centre of the plain, without daring to look up at the prison of his benefactress, as it frowned on him from the heights, which, on the east, bounded the level grounds. His march had been hurried and toilsome; for the snows, melting among the Apennines, aided by heavy rains, had swollen every brook to a torrent; and the roads, at all times steep and rough, had been rendered almost impassable by masses of earth and rock, and fallen trees, strewed over them by the waters and winds. He followed in the rear of his troops, mounted on a jaded horse, who stumbled with fatigue under his master, as he descended the last hill that swept down to the plains; and with his head sunk on his breast, the rider vented the moodiness of his mind in frequent ejaculations of impatience at the worn-out animal. Changed, —

changed, indeed, was the whole outward aspect of that warrior, within one short twelvemonth. He was clad yet in the complete steel, whose fashion had just superseded that of mail, when the introduction of artillery threatened to render it as useless as it was cumbrous; but he no longer bore himself aloft with the noble, chivalrous air of his more virtuous days. The solid helmet pressed no more heavily on his brows than of yore; but he was weighed down by the consciousness of guilt, which lay on him as a mighty burden, and still more by that which he deemed a *necessity* for crimes yet more fearful. His closed visor hid a face darkened by the terrible meditations of his soul.

His evil genius came to meet him under the ominous shadows of the primeval forest; Father Matteo had awaited him for some hours at the monastery, and now rode forth to communicate tidings which were of no small import.

"What is that you say?" exclaimed Durazzo, starting from a sullen reverie; "Louis has crossed the Alps? — and with what force?"

"Rumor tells so wild a story," answered the priest, "that we can lend her little credit. They say the plains about Bologna shake under the tramp of thirty thousand cavalry."

"Impossible! impossible!" cried Charles, "unless some wily sorcerer hath called up armed knights and chargers from the ground, to take the field for Anjou."

"Ay," resumed the monk, "and whirled them through the air across those Alpine barriers. But allowing for all probable exaggerations, we may well fear that he brings with him a force sufficient to accomplish his avowed object."

"And what may that be, if not to war on us?"

"His immediate purpose is to release Joanna from her confinement."

Durazzo's gesture indicated his surprise and anger, but he made no reply.

"There are tidings also from the city," continued Father Matteo, after a brief pause. "I left it because I saw that the *Wild Horse** of Naples grew restive; and a courier, this afternoon, brought news of an insurrection among that idle and innumerable populace."

"We will carry them snowballs from the mountains," said Durazzo, with a sneer; "it is easy to cool the fever of Neapolitan patriotism with a little iced water."

Father Matteo shook his head. "Their Queen Joanna, as they style her, still sits on an invisible throne in the bosom of each poor man in the city. The affections are spiritual, my son, and you will find it hard to use sword and lance against these shadowy opposers."

"Peace! I pray you, good father," exclaimed Charles; "I will take order with these lounging

* An emblem on the banner of the Neapolitan populace.

knaves. Came not Castiglione with you to meet me?"

"He hath declared against you."

"He, — Di Castiglione!" cried the usurper, with unconcealed dismay; — "the man I have trusted again and again! He that has fought battle after battle by my side! I gave him charge of my wife, when she came last year to meet me; I commissioned him to carry yonder headstrong woman to her cage, because I thought his gentle courtesy fitted him for such task; but I deemed him true as steel. Are you well advised of what you say?"

"I am," replied the monk, with a laconic coolness, which was peculiarly irritating to his fiery companion.

"And what more? Come, — these are all refreshing tidings after a defeat and a weary day's journey. Have you no more blessed news for me? I shall sleep soundly after these anodynes."

"Di Castiglione has tampered with the barons who gave you the preference over Anjou, because, they said, no Frenchman should wear the crown of Naples; and three of them — the very three whom you lately sent with propositions to yonder castle — have joined him in his revolt."

"So, so; our prospect brightens apace! She has but to look upon my best followers with her proud smiles, and the bonds of their allegiance dissolve. I think we will send her no more messengers, — no more false-hearted barons; *you* shall deal with her, good father. Were it not wise?"

"They say," resumed the priest, "that the hardships of this winter have undermined her health; that she hath been ill."

"Ill!" repeated Durazzo, his dark eye flashing through his visor. "You have spoken one word of pleasing import at last. She is of flesh, — and all flesh must fade; she will not live for ever. Ay, ay; when she perishes from my path, all other obstacles will shrink aside, or be as nothing. What is her malady?"

"Men will call it a broken heart; a tedious disease, my son."

"Is that all?" asked the prince impatiently; — "hath she no burning fever? — no wasting consumption in her blood? — nothing that promises her a speedy deliverance from those high walls?"

"Nothing of that sort. I said she *had* been ill; but it was some slight, passing distemper, that hath already left her; the rumor thereof, in all likelihood, will excite fresh sympathies in her behalf. If the eagles of the air carry her tidings of all that is undertaken for her release, she will begin a new life; for the hope of freedom is an efficient cordial for the sick captive."

"Freedom!" muttered the chieftain; "there is but one freedom for her."

"I would her sickness had been unto death," said Father Matteo; "at this crisis it might have been your salvation."

He made this remark thoughtfully, and with a

side glance endeavoured to observe its effect on his companion, but the sudden halt of the prince startled him. The flush of sunset had long since died away, but a pale, amber light yet lingered on the western horizon; the new moon and the evening star hung there, side by side; and as the two riders emerged from under the trees, Charles, turning upon his companion, threw up his visor, under the soft radiance of that most beautiful hour. Never was there a more fearful contrast with the tranquillity of nature. If the iron frame of that monk could have shaken with human feeling, he would have trembled as he looked on the dreadful expression of Durazzo's features. "Father Matteo!" said the unhappy man, in a low, hollow voice, "look on me and read what is in my heart! You have the fiend-like power to penetrate its gloomy recesses, and call its unformed purposes of evil into being. Tell me how to shape its present designs!"

The crafty monk saw that he was no longer called on to suggest iniquity, but to aid in its accomplishment; the triumph of the Prince of Darkness was complete over the once struggling victim, and the work was nearly done. With wary hesitation, he gazed on the prince irresolutely, as if uncertain how to understand him; but Charles exclaimed more vehemently, — "Why do you not answer me? You do, — you must comprehend! Is there more than *one* deed that hath no name?"

"My son," replied the monk, "I have said that

the death of Joanna would be your salvation; do I understand you now?"

Durazzo shuddered and looked round wildly, as the night breeze came rustling through the forest behind them. "Who goes there?" cried he; "have we not listeners in the coppice?"

"No," said the monk calmly; "you are agitated, my brave prince. Be composed, and let us talk deliberately of your affairs. They are in an unpromising state assuredly; the juncture is perilous."

"Perilous!" interrupted Charles, "it is desperate; it drives me wild. I tell you, the storm breaks from every quarter at once, and I will endure its buffetings no more. That woman," — and he ground his teeth and raised his gauntleted hand towards the dark mountain, where a twinkling light pointed out the turret of Joanna, — "that woman is a thorn in my side, — an arrow in my flesh, — a canker at my heart's core. Her influence comes out from her solitary cell, and baffles me everywhere, winning prince and peasant by the mere magic of her name. While that proud heart of hers throbs with life, there is neither peace nor prosperity for her successor; no stability for his throne; no security for his days. See you not this, father?"

"I have seen it long," replied the monk.

"And can I bear it?"

"Not if you are a man, with energy enough to snap the mere cobweb that entangles you."

"I could burst chains of forged steel! It is not

the rage of a moment that nerves my arm. No, good priest; for many days and nights past, my mind has been working, — working, — taking deadlier hues from the troubles that darkened around me. And though I dared not look steadfastly on my own purposes, as they flickered like horrid phantoms in the void of the future, I knew to what I must come. I rode last night among these savage mountains till daybreak; and what think you banished hunger, thirst, fatigue? What followed at my horse's heels, wailing in my ears continually, as we trampled along the rocky defiles? Some unseen demon, good father, whispering murder! murder! all the livelong night."

The priest smiled: — "This form of frenzy bodes some spirited deed, I acknowledge," said he; "but the how, the when, the where, if your courage hold?"

"They must be matters of prudent deliberation," said the prince; "and as soon as I have crushed these gnats at Naples ——"

"Pardon me," interrupted the monk; "there is yet another item of intelligence I had wellnigh forgotten. The queen comes to meet you."

"The queen!" repeated Durazzo; "what queen?"

"The queen Margaret, — your royal consort."

"And what brings her into these wild mountains? Why has she not waited my summons? These are no times for itinerant princesses, when lances scour the country in every direction. What seeks she?"

"I hear her errand is to solicit the liberation of your prisoner."

"Is it so? We will not encounter her soft pleadings; we will take another road."

"You cannot well avoid her; she and her train lodge this night at Capanna. It was her purpose to meet you here; but the weariness of her children compelled her to halt at ten miles' distance, and she will join you early to-morrow morning."

"She must not; — she shall not!"

"Nay," said the monk, "it may matter little. She may come too late."

"How? — how so?" asked Charles, somewhat bewildered.

"Why," replied Father Matteo, "your prisoner has had a most well-timed indisposition of late. It may return, — it may prove fatal, — it may save your fair queen the trouble of those eloquent expostulations from which you shrink."

"To-night? — do you mean this very night?" asked Charles in a whisper, again looking fearfully round, as if conscious that the very stones of the valley ought to cry out against such foul conspiracy.

"Is not your purpose fixed?" said his companion. "Is not the deed to be done? Is not your condition such as to make it, not only a matter of policy, but necessity? Will you have the folly and feebleness to procrastinate for a single day the one bold stroke, which cuts the knot of your embarrassments? Shun not this queen of yours; it would excite suspicion.

Let her come hither to-morrow morning. Meet her boldly, and let her hear the message which will come down from Il Muro before the dew is off the grass. Take my counsel once more, my son; for if you have not the courage to do, *at once*, what you perceive to be fitting, it will never, — never be done; and your destruction is at hand. Mark my words. I have not prompted you to the deed; but I declare that nothing else can save you. I offer to conduct the transaction with such secrecy, that the world shall never cry aloud, — *Charles did it.* Stealthy whispers, vague surmises, may be stifled; — as yonder fair-spoken Joanna might testify, from the dark experiences of her own early life."

"Priest! priest!" exclaimed Charles, "tell me one thing; tell me truly. Was it not all foul calumny? Is her conscience heavy with a husband's blood? Do *you* believe it?"

"I *do*," replied the monk with solemnity.

Durazzo looked him earnestly in the face a moment, and then his head sunk on his breast, as he groaned aloud. "I do *not*," said he. "Would to God that I could! I would give half this realm to know that there was a shadow of just retribution in this dreadful measure, — to feel myself the avenger of innocent blood; but it cannot be! My conviction of her blameless uprightness rests on the close intercourse of years, when in the free, unguarded communion —— Let us speak of it no more. Her soul will need few masses, when I have sent it to the

long account, — and mine, — good father, — you will shrive me! You will give me absolution! Blessed be the power of the Church; there is no crime beyond the reach of its mercy."

"Crime!" said the monk impatiently; — "what speak you of crime? Could you do the Church better service, than by thrusting this rebellious and malignant child out of existence? Is not the seal of perdition upon her? Look for wreaths of gold and palms of glory, my son; for you do but perform the will of Heaven in this matter. Blind and ignorant men might cast censure on you, therefore let it be a deed of privacy and darkness; but from the great Head of the Church, from Urban himself, approbation, assistance, and all manner of favor will descend upon you. Trust me; he that lays low the haughty head of Joanna does God and man service."

During this conversation, the two riders had resumed their journey, and had now reached the southern bank of the stream, which meandered through the valley from east to west. The monastery of Santa Maria stood on the opposite side, and farther up; but the only access to it was over a slight wooden bridge which they were approaching; and as they caught the glimmer of its waves, dancing in the moonbeams, they perceived the river was swollen, till the water laved the very edges of the rough planks, and at times washed across them. Branches, and even trunks of trees, hurried along by the rapid current, were accumulating on the upper side; and

after reconnoitring it a few moments, as they halted under the willow-trees, Durazzo and his companion crossed it singly and cautiously, lest it should be swept from under them. Soon afterwards, finding themselves among the soldiery, they postponed their fearful theme till Charles had taken possession of a friar's cell in the monastery. There, forbidding all intrusion, he summoned his confessor to his side again; and there, in that quiet retreat of simple piety, shut in by stone walls, which had been raised to exclude all earthly temptations from its tenants, and surrounded only by the emblems of religion, he resumed the unhallowed consultation. We will follow its details no more.

In the mean time, the page of Charles, who had been sent forward by his master to the monastery before the sun set, had become impatient and anxious, on seeing that the waters continued to rise as evening came on, and he had gone back to meet him. Crossing the little bridge, he had sat down beneath the willow-trees, and almost exhausted by the fatigues of the recent march, as he awaited his master, he looked up at the stars, shining through the long, slender, waving branches, with eyes that, in spite of himself, closed in momentary slumber. In vain he struggled against it, straining his ears to catch the distant tread of horse. The waves murmured by him with a most lulling sound; the tall sedges, not yet under water, rustled in the breeze; the gleaming light from the tower of Muro, on the

mountain, seemed to recede, and become a star in the dark sky; and all things gradually assumed a shadowy and dreamy aspect, till a profound sleep fell irresistibly on his eyelids. He woke not till roused by the tramp of steeds close at hand; and as he started up, the harsh voice of Father Matteo struck his ear, uttering the too intelligible words, — "*He that lays low the head of Joanna does God and man service.*" His blood ran cold; — he remained immovable, concealed in deep shadow, while his master and the monk, unconscious of his presence, debated on the security of the bridge, finally crossed it, and rode out of sight, leaving him petrified with dismay, as he pondered on the ominous words. His resolution was soon taken. He knew that Margaret was at Capanna; and rushing once more over the tottering bridge, with a fleet, light step, he procured a horse among the officers, pretending that he was despatched by his master, and instantly took the road down the river-side to the village. It was not necessary to cross the stream again; and long before midnight, he stood in the presence of the amazed wife of Durazzo.

She heard his tale with speechless horror; and then repelled with indignation the suspicion that her lord would yield to suggestions so barbarous.

"You know him not as he now is!" exclaimed the youth; "believe me, gentle lady, my beloved master is an altered man. You have not watched, as I have done, the terrible change stealing over him

for months past; his temper, — his heart, lady, — so hardened. Come to him, I implore you! You alone can soften it; you alone can counteract the influence of that dreadful priest. Have mercy on your husband and on the royal captive!"

The agitation of Giovanni could not be witnessed without exciting some sympathetic alarm, and Margaret at last assented. "If you warned me that he was but threatened with a dangerous malady, I should fly to him; surely the evil that endangers soul, instead of body, is more fearful; — and it may be, — it may be, — that he yields. Holy Virgin, aid me! I will go."

Leaving the greater part of her train to follow with her children next day, Margaret left Capanna at midnight, and rode up the river-banks under the protection of Giovanni and a few chosen horsemen. Sad and silent was the little journey. The road in many places was covered with water, so that the party were obliged to take higher ground, forcing their way through thick aloes, while every moment of delay seemed intolerable to those whose anxiety and impatience increased the more they reflected on the circumstances in which Durazzo was placed. Giovanni observed with pleasure that the surface of the stream was covered with wrecks, which testified that the force of the current had carried away the bridge, nearly opposite the monastery; — and when they reached the spot, he pointed out the fact to his royal mistress, assuring her that the destruction of

the bridge must have prevented all passage to the road that led up among the mountains.

"He can have sent no messengers to Il Muro this night," said the page, with a lightened heart, as he assisted the trembling lady to dismount at the convent gate. The door was opened before they had demanded admittance; but it was to give egress to a tall, dark figure, which started back at first, on meeting them, and then, with muffled face, passed hastily out, and disappeared in the gloom. Giovanni looked suspiciously and anxiously after it, and then urged the admission of the queen to her husband. It was in vain. The friars obstinately refused to disturb the prince, who had expressly forbidden all intrusion upon his solitude that night; and the vehemence of the youth, the pathetic entreaties of Margaret, were alike wasted. She was, however, conducted to a cell, and there left alone, by a monk whose charity and hospitality could carry him no farther. Repose she could not; but as she kneeled at her devotions, awed by the stillness which prevailed ere long through the cells and cloisters of the whole building, it seemed to her that something stirred near her door. A soft tap was presently heard, and as she opened it, an aged friar presented himself, with a light in his hand. "Daughter," said he, "I was once in the world, till its sorrows drove me hither. I had a wife, as young, beautiful, and loving as thou art; and while she walked with me on earth, she made me a better man. For the sake of her

memory, dim in my soul for many years till this night, I will lead thee to thy husband. Use thy influence well, daughter, — for therefore did God bestow it. Beauty is a holy gift, and the woman that views it aright forgets vanity, and trembles at her responsibility." So saying, the mild old man, with a noiseless step, moved along the passage, and placing the lamp on the floor near a door which stood ajar, he cast one more compassionate glance at the fair creature, who trembled as she approached a husband's presence, and whispering, "Linked to a man of blood, — I pity thee!" he withdrew.

Margaret paused for a few minutes to summon strength. Not a sound came from the apartment; a light glimmered within, but it seemed as if the repose of death must be there. Arousing all her courage, she at length pushed the door open slowly, and stood on the threshold. The bare walls within were feebly lighted by a candle, waning in its socket. As its blaze rose and sunk, uncertain shadows flickered about the room, and the mournful effigy of a suffering Saviour, which hung on the wall, seemed its only occupant. Margaret took up her own lamp and advanced a few steps, when she discovered the prostrate figure of her husband, stretched on a rude pallet of straw in a corner. "He sleeps!" thought she joyfully; "*could* he sleep if he purposed such a crime?" Her reflections were broken by a convulsive shudder, which passed over the limbs of Durazzo, and a stifled groan. "It is troubled sleep,"

she thought again; and, placing her lamp on the rough table, she drew near him, and perceived that his attitude was not that of slumber. His face was buried in the pillow; his hands locked over his head, as if he had thrown himself down in agony. She stooped, and softly whispering, "Charles!" she touched one of those burning hands with hers. At that sound and touch, he sprang up on his knees, and glared on her with a livid face, and eyes that seemed starting from their sockets. Appalled and speechless, she stood trembling, till, in a hoarse and almost inarticulate voice, he demanded, — "Margaret! *is* it Margaret?"

"Surely, — it is your wife," replied she; "none other would dare come to your side unbidden. But, O Charles! is it thus you welcome me? Do you not know me, beloved?"

His eyes wandered about so wildly, that for an instant a surmise of his insanity crossed her mind, and she retreated a few paces, when he leaped up, and, seating himself on the side of the couch, placed his hands before his face, as if striving to recollect himself. "Margaret here!" said he again; — "and how is that? Whence came you?"

"From Capanna," replied the princess; "have I done wrong to seek my lord uncalled? O my beloved husband! we meet not as we once did!"

"And I am not what I was!" cried Charles, in a softened tone; and as he looked on her steadfastly a few moments, the wildness passed from his eyes;

they even filled with tears. "Beautiful, — though pale! — sweet and gentle as ever!" said he. "Thou hast been ill, my wife; — and our separation has been long!" He held out both his hands to her, and she threw herself on his neck, weeping without restraint. Again and again she attempted to speak, but a fresh burst of emotion checked her words; and Charles held her in silence, till the violence of her feelings was expended. When she became calm, she rose and looked in his face, smiling through her tears with the same innocent expression he remembered so well in the April days of her childhood; but a change had passed over his countenance; — the demon was there again. He almost threw her from him as he cried, — "Smile not on me, Margaret! What have I to do with angels? Go, go! — leave me! It is my pleasure to be alone. Gave I not orders ——" Margaret clasped her hands supplicatingly, and again approached him; but in a voice of thunder he repeated, "Leave me, I say! What brought you hither? Who gave you entrance?"

"Dearest, — dearest!" said Margaret, still courageously drawing closer to the frantic man, though he lifted his clenched hand, as if actually about to deal a furious blow on her temples. Such daring, in a creature so soft and naturally so timid, smote him with a nameless sensation, that overpowered all wild passions, and he remained immovable, till she imperceptibly sunk at his feet, threw back the dishevelled locks from her face, embraced his knees, and re-

mained with upturned countenance, mutely imploring forbearance, such tenderness beaming from her eyes, that a heart of stone must have been melted.

His arm dropped. "Margaret! Margaret!" said he, "thou hast grown bold! Whence comes this new-found courage?"

"Do I not love thee, Charles?"

"Even yet, — my wife?"

"Till death."

"No, — no, — no! Deceive not thyself; thou canst not love me always. Were I unworthy of thee, couldst thou love me?"

"Thou shalt *not* be. It was to ward off evil, beloved, that I came hither. Thou *hast* erred much, and they told me that temptation had again beset thee; therefore nothing had power to daunt me, — to keep me from thy side. O Charles! the deeds thou hast done since we parted are dreadful; but it is not too late to retrieve all, — not too late to repair the wrong, and be again happy."

"Woman! woman!" cried Durazzo, fiercely; "thou knowest not what thou sayest! For what purpose camest thou hither, demon in a seraph's shape? To mock me? — to hiss at me? What brought thee hither, I say?" He gazed on her with fixed eyeballs, and, from the darkened corner in which he stood, they glared like a tiger's; but he no longer beheld a quaking suppliant, ready to sink at his feet.

Some new feeling had rushed over the mind of

Margaret, and though she became pale as marble, she stirred not, she trembled not, but met his maniac stare with an expression of countenance he had never seen her wear before. "Charles," said she, "I came hither to save thee from thyself. Why do I find thee mad, — mad, my husband? What crime hast thou been ruminating upon, by the midnight lamp, till thy noble reason is almost unseated? Think of it no more; — think only of me. Rejoice that I have come between thee and thy meditated crime."

Charles gnashed his teeth, and rapidly muttered in a low tone, — "Art thou not come too late?"

The words had hardly struck her ear, when Margaret disengaged herself from him, sprang to the centre of the room, and turning upon him a face of horror, asked in a whisper, fearfully distinct, "Am I the wife of a murderer? Stand back till I am answered. Heaven breaks our vows if it be so."

"Then they are cancelled!" was the half-suffocated answer of Durazzo.

Margaret uttered not a word; the veins in her forehead swelled, and she gasped for breath.

Charles, suddenly rousing himself from his stupor, exclaimed, — "What have I said? Margaret! — Margaret! believe it not. Did I say I had murdered her? No, — no, — she lives yet, — it may be. *I* have struck no blow."

"Durazzo!" said the princess, "trifle not with me. What *hast* thou done? It is remorse that almost maddens thee, and think not to keep thy fatal

secret from a wife. The guilt undivulged for years will escape thy lips, and cast thee from me at some future hour of agony; for never, never, will I knowingly share the fortunes of —— O Charles! I cannot utter that fearful word again. Tell me; what hast thou done?"

Still Durazzo sat in sullen silence. The suggestions of the page flashed on her mind. "Hast thou sent orders to yonder mountain to-night?" she asked. The look with which he answered her told enough; and clasping her hands, she cried in a tone of joy, — "Heaven be praised! I have *not* come too late. No message can have passed that swollen stream, and O my husband! thou art saved from anguish unutterable and eternal."

"What mean you?" exclaimed the bewildered Durazzo.

"That God hath interposed, — that the wild work of the elements hath been merciful to thee. The bridges have been swept away; and if thou hast indeed been in the power of evil spirits, and hast sent bloody commands to Il Muro, they cannot have been transmitted."

Charles rose, but stood perplexed, his faculties confused by a revulsion of feeling so unexpected. "Art thou sure?" asked he, at last, abruptly.

"I saw the wrecks with my own eyes," replied Margaret; "I saw the stream unspanned by the handiwork of man, as it hurried foaming through the plain; and your own page told me, no man could have crossed it this night."

"But he will seek a passage higher up," said Durazzo.

"Then fly! — fly at once!" exclaimed the princess; "whoever may be your bloody courier, he must have met with embarrassment and delay; he may be overtaken. O Charles! I found thee in purgatory, but if there is paradise on earth, thou shalt know it to-morrow night, when looking on thy bloodless hands. She who loved us so fondly will forgive thee, — O, speed! speed! Why dost thou delay?"

"Down, busy fiend!" muttered Durazzo to himself, still fixing his eyes on the floor, a dark and terrible irresolution sitting on his brow.

"Thou dost not hesitate?" cried Margaret, astonished and terrified. "Then Satan is indeed here, though mine eyes behold him not. Good saints and angels, defend us!"

"Margaret," said Durazzo, "her life is my earthly ruin, — my death!"

"Believe it not!" cried Margaret, something of Joanna's noble spirit flashing from her beautiful face; "it is the foul fiend that whispers it. And what if it be so? Come death; come any thing but guilt and eternal remorse! Husband of my youth, rather would I hang over thy bloody corse, and know that those beloved eyes would never look on me again, so that thou diedst innocent of this foul, irreparable crime! Then the memory of thy virtues would minister comfort. Let me rather wear the widow's garment of mourning than live to shudder at thy approach!"

"Callest thou this the language of love?" said Charles, bitterly.

"Ay, of love the purest, the most exalted; — love that adores, hopes, pleads to the last, contending and struggling with sin itself for thy salvation; — love that is quicksighted to thy true dignity and happiness; — love that foresees thy coming agony of remorse, and trembles even at the earthly retribution that will overtake thee; — love that clings to thee on the very brink of a precipice! When thou *hast* fallen, — then, indeed, virtuous love must forsake thee, a ruined and degraded wretch. Start not! Since all higher appeals fail, hear this! Wife as I am, — fond and faithful wife, — mother of thy children, — Durazzo, I declare to thee, that, polluted with the murder of a benefactress, the cold-blooded, ungrateful, deliberate assassin shall forfeit all reverence, all homage, all affection, from the woman that once adored him! He shall search for her in bower and hall, and find her not, to share the fruits of his sin and infamy. No, Charles; thou mayst revel amid empty pomps if thou canst, but thy broken-hearted wife shall kneel at the foot of the cross, in some lonely convent, forsaking thee and the world, to drag out her days in penitence for another's crime. O noble and wretched Joanna, is this thy reward? Is it by a cruel, violent death thou must pass from a life of many sorrows? Charles, couldst thou have the heart to look on her dying agonies? Couldst thou behold those eyes closed for ever, that

beamed so kindly on thee, knowing thyself her murderer, and ever hope for peace again? Picture her lying, this moment, cold and lifeless at thy feet; and then remember the hour of thine own dissolution, fearful and frantic with the pangs of remorse, — perhaps bloody, unconsoled, deserted by man, frowned upon by the unutterable wrath of God! Thou *must* die, Charles; thou knowest not *when;* but be it tomorrow, or in a decrepit old age, the memory of this very moment, fleeting so swiftly by us, will be with thee then. It speeds, — it speeds; — it will be gone, never to return! O, seize it, my wretched husband! It hurries thee to perdition, and I cling to thee in vain. O Joanna! more than mother! when his children ask me of thy death, what shall I say? Have mercy on us all, Charles! Cover not thy innocent offspring with ignominy. Leave me not to shudder, when I speak to them of their father! Hath any man a right to bequeathe shame to his children? Have mercy on thyself! it is for thine own soul, for thy salvation, I plead; and the invisible God, who hears and sees us this moment, will remember these tears against thee! Yet I would die any death, to save thee from this complicated guilt! Thou yieldest! I see it in thy softening aspect; — the cloud passes from thy brow; — thy lip quivers, — thou art saved! Holy Mother, be praised! Guardian angels are about us, and the discomfited fiend retires!"

"Thou, — thou art, indeed, my guardian angel, glorious, inspired being!" cried Charles.

"Give not *me* the honor," said Margaret; "but haste, — fly, — trust no messenger, — go in person. If I am worthy to be her sister's child, let me look once more on that august countenance. Come to me with forgiveness from her living lips upon thy brow, or never approach me again. Nay; bring her from the prison that dishonors thee; or the wife of Durazzo becomes the bride of Heaven! — And thou, image of a suffering Saviour, listen to my vows!"

As she spoke, she threw herself exhausted before the crucifix. Durazzo cast but a single glance on her kneeling figure, on a face pale with the anguish of the scene and streaming with tears, and on eyes uplifted in fervent faith. He rushed from the cell, and Margaret heard his rapid steps as he fled along the cloister, — the eager voice of Giovanni, — the loud demand for his war-horse. Then came the bustle among the soldiers, — the trampling of the charger, — the furious gallop, dying away in the distance, — the gradual subsiding of the confusion within doors, and all was again still. It seemed like a dream. She prostrated herself in prayer, till nearly an hour had passed away; then she arose and returned to the cell the friars had appropriated to her, and at its door found the page, his countenance beaming with joy. "All will go well," cried he. "The priest had but left my master when we ar-

rived. The caitiff took with him four Hungarians; he durst not ask such service of Neapolitans; and they rode up and down the river-bank, vainly seeking boat, bridge, or fording-place. Then they ascended the pass to a narrowing of the stream, and there cut down trees and threw them across. I tracked them so far and returned, told the king as he came forth, and he galloped thither at once. He will overtake them, lady; they must delay to fell trees from time to time, as they pass the mountain torrents, and he will press unchecked over their bridges;—all is safe! By the gray light of dawn, I saw his white charger but now, as he passed the face of the Black Rock, nearly half way up the mountain side; he cannot be far behind them." Margaret clasped her hands thankfully, and retired to bear her suspense, where solicitude of the most intense nature is always best endured, — in solitude.

Giovanni was right. The monk had been delayed, finding no passage across the swollen stream; but, bent on fulfilling his atrocious mission, he had gone higher up the river, where it issued from the gorge between two wooded cliffs, that nearly met over its bed; and here a few trees, hastily felled, had allowed him and his ruffians to reach the opposite bank, far above which rose the solitary fortress. Charles, acting once more under the better impulses of his nature, pursued his own myrmidons furiously; yet so long had been the interval between their departure from the monastery and his own, that his heart al-

most sickened with despair, as he followed their tracks up the steep ascent, and dashed over the rude bridges they had constructed. Higher, they seemed to have met with less to delay them; the old bridges had not been carried away by the upper brooks; and the perspiration stood on his brow, as he emerged from the forest-trees which encircled the lower region of the mountain. Raising himself on his stirrups, he looked over the stunted firs and gray rocks; — not a figure was to be seen moving up the melancholy waste. The mists of the valley had not begun to ascend, and the air around was so pure, so full of light from the yet unrisen sun, that he seemed to have reached the very birthplace of the morning. No matin-song of birds, as on lower earth, welcomed the approaching god of day; nor did the wild scream of the still slumbering eagle break the silence of those awful solitudes, — a silence more dreadful than the voice of battle to the conscience-smitten man, who felt as if his guilty soul were here brought alone face to face with his Maker. Onward he pressed, and the noble animal he rode strained every nerve against the steep ascent, now striking fire with his hoofs, as he clattered over the rocks, now bounding along the boggy interval, where the short Alpine grasses and wild-flowers yielded to his hurricane passage. By snatches the pleadings of his weeping Margaret haunted the fierce rider, and the words, "Picture her lying cold and lifeless at thy feet!" sounded ever and anon in his ear, while, at each fresh

pang of remorse and terror, he goaded the snow-white flanks of his charger till the blood streamed from them. Occasionally the towers of Il Muro came in sight, clearly defined against the morning sky; but in vain he eyed them; they told no tales of the work doing within their dark circuit. He knew not if the murderer's step had yet touched their threshold, or whether their noble inmate still slumbered peacefully, unconscious that the wing of the destroying angel waved so near her.

He reached at last a spot where the road narrowed almost to a footpath, made a sharp turn round a cliff, which rose high on his right, while on the left a steep slope led down to the brink of a fearful chasm. Heedless of the dizzying abyss, as he was about to wheel rapidly round the projecting angle of the rock, he almost came violently in contact with the person of a man descending on foot. It was the monk; his cowl thrown back, — his face more ghastly than usual, — his eyes wild. Both for a moment gazed on each other as if thunderstruck, and then Durazzo, though his tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth, demanded abruptly, "Is it over?"

"No; she lives," replied the monk, attempting to put his hand on Charles's bridle, — "but ——"

Durazzo stayed not to hear the sentence completed; again he plunged the spurs into his nearly spent charger, and rushing violently between Father Matteo and the rocky wall on his right, turned the corner and continued his upward course. He heard

not the cry that followed him; he knew not that the shock had thrown the miserable monk upon the slope, on whose verge he was standing. It was smooth and slaty; its inclination almost perpendicular; not a shrub, not a blade of grass, grew upon it, and as the wretch alternately slid and rolled down, in vain he clutched the pebbles that filled his grasp, without staying his destruction. He was at the brink of the precipice, — he was gone! Yet he had time to know and feel the complete horror of his situation. Below the verge of the cliff, a few young trees sprang from the interstices of the rocks, on one of which the falling monk seized with a frantic grasp. One look upward at the blue sky with fleecy clouds sailing across, — a single shuddering glance downward. The roar of the cataract came up distinctly; he saw the white foam at the bottom of the gloom; he felt the shrub to which he clung bending, — giving way, — and heard the earth and stones around rattling and thundering down the face of the precipice. For an instant, like flashes of lightning, the recollection of crime and terrors of judgment darted through his soul; in another moment all was over. In the midst of health and strength, in the full possession of his faculties, and conscious of his situation, the bad man went to his account. When the heats of summer dried up the mountain torrent, the wolf and the bird of prey alone knew where his bones lay, amid the rocks of a lonely defile, untrodden by the foot of man; and a rumor went abroad

that the ambitious Dominican, the proud confessor of Durazzo, who had disappeared so mysteriously from amidst men, had perished by the hands of the lawless banditti of the Apennines.

CHAPTER XIII.

Refreshing had been the slumbers of Joanna on the night preceding the twenty-eighth of May; and pleasant dreams had hovered about her pillow, bringing round her the scenes and friends of her youth. The beautiful face of Philippa, the Catanese, whom years before she had fondly cherished with the friendship of unsuspecting girlhood, — whom she had seen torn from her arms to perish in tortures, — had smiled upon her again and again, amid her visions; and as she awoke at daybreak, the lovely phantom seemed to melt gradually away, still smiling and beckoning her; while, above and in the background, the yet more celestial countenance of the Holy Mother looked down on the dreamer with an aspect that breathed peace and consolation.

She rose, not to mourn over the vanishing illusion and at the harsh realities about her, but to kneel in gratitude, because happy dreams were not shut out from the prisoner, — because unseen protection had guarded her slumbers and cheered her drooping spirit.

Her late indisposition had passed away, and an exhilarating perception of returning strength — a luxury unknown to one who never experiences sickness — ran through her veins. She stood at her favorite window, which looked eastward into the very heart of the mountain scenery, and as the dappled skies gradually brightened with crimson and gold, a thought of the vain earthly pomps in which she had once taken such delight stole into her mind. "Idle and frivolous were ye all!" she said to herself, "and mercifully was I drawn away from snares and temptations. When the work is done, — when the spirit is purified, — then will it be called away. But as yet, earth holds something to which it cleaves. Could I but linger to speak one cheering word to Otho, — to embrace my beloved Margaret once more, — to kiss the fair brows of her children! Could I but see my poor, deluded, miserable Charles, once more touched with penitence, his hard heart softened like the rock in the wilderness, and gushing again with pure affections! Cannot the God, who smote the firm granite with the prophet's rod, work a moral miracle? —Why am I haunted with such fond fancies! Let me not become a dreamer, when the heavens are flooded with the broad light of day. Enough for visions in the dead hour of night, when the eye sees not, when the hand is weary, and the senses crave their necessary repose."

So saying, she shook off the inclination for melancholy reverie which was stealing over her, and with

one admiring glance at the mists which had covered the valley like a sea, and were now climbing upwards in silver wreaths, she turned energetically to her morning tasks. A single volume in Latin, the production of a venerable father of an earlier century, had lately found its way to her aerial prison; and she often amused herself with committing passages to memory, or reading it aloud in choice Italian, for not in vain had she been educated in the court of her grandfather, Robert of Sicily, the patron of reviving literature. Thus employed she sat; and as she read, she slowly unbound the thick tresses which were now bearing testimony that sickness and trouble silver the dark locks of woman no less than time. The last few months had changed them much; but it was with a faint smile, not with a sigh, that the most beautiful female of her day looked on the token of her fading loveliness. Like all strong-minded women, she had never prized the flattery that chose her person for its theme; but had sought from the wise and good that approbation which age could not forfeit; and she neither mourned what was lost, nor triumphed in the consciousness that her majestic beauty might even yet have dazzled a courtier's eye.

In the midst of these quiet occupations, she heard the immense door unbarred, at the end of a long vaulted passage, leading to her apartment. It was the customary sound at this period of the day; but there was an unusual violence in the haste with which it was thrown back, and the footsteps ap-

proaching along the stone floor were heavy and many. "Another embassy from Charles!" she said to herself; "it is an uncommon and unseemly hour. They must bring me tidings of pressing importance. O, could it be that among the mysterious vicissitudes of life, Anjou hath terminated my captivity, and my freedom were at hand! Be quiet, throbbing heart!"

Striving to conquer the emotion with which this thought — so natural, yet so wild — tinged her cheek and brightened her eye, she surveyed the opening door of her apartment. Those without held a whispering consultation; it seemed as if they hesitated on the very threshold; but her suspense was not long. Four strangers entered, one by one, — silently arranging themselves along the wall. Theirs were not the well-known faces of Neapolitan barons; their limbs were clad neither in the glittering armour nor the silken tunic of the nobles; she missed even the familiar, dark eye of Italy, which might have spoken some encouragement. Foreigners, — Hungarians, — hired ruffians! she read them and their fatal business at a glance, and a sudden sickness of the heart for an instant came upon her. It was not in human nature to look, without apprehension, on death, approaching so unexpectedly, with violence, perhaps with torture. But though she involuntarily pressed her hands together, clasping the crucifix which always hung at her girdle, she neither started up with undignified terror, nor uttered a single ejaculation. Three of

the men gazed on her with cold and curious eyes; she saw no token of sensibility or humanity there, to which she might appeal; they were of the lowest rank of society, utterly abandoned and inured to crime. Their leader alone appeared embarrassed and unable to meet the eye of Joanna, as if capable of appreciating the magnanimity with which she seemed prepared to encounter her fate. After waiting in vain for him to disclose his errand, she herself broke silence at last. "You are a stranger to me, — a foreigner. Do you speak Italian?"

The man answered in the affirmative.

"Then if your business be with Joanna of Naples, she is before you; unfold it."

He still hesitated, — looked at the door, — at his followers, — and began. "Lady, I am not wont to shrink from that which I undertake; but the gold that has bought my services this day will be hardly earned. I know not how to look upon you, and remember the reward that is to banish my poverty."

"I understand you; my hour is come. Tell me only by whose order a life of sorrows is to close in blood." The Hungarian shook his head. "You are forbidden to speak a name so high? It is an idle mystery. My prison walls are protection to me against all save one, and his authority alone can admit the hired assassin to my guarded cell. But it is best; — the sound of *that* name, as the sanction of such a deed! — let me not hear it. Would I had died peacefully on yonder couch, and spared his soul

this last leap into sin and misery! I could not have believed, — could not have dreamed it! I will not think of it, — for the departing spirit should be calm. Stranger, by what mode is it your will that I should pass from this troubled scene of shadows?"

"It is the pleasure of those who sent us hither, that no mark of violence remain on your person."

"I thank them for the unintentional grace; so much of the woman and the queen remains uncrushed, that I should have shrunk from the fierce handling of your ruffians. Alas! — idle thought! — say on."

"We are ordered to allow your Majesty a choice between three deaths," said the man, awed into the use of a term, which had but seldom reached her ear of late.

She repeated the word sadly after him. "There is but *One* Majesty, and no mortal eye hath seen that. I rejoice that I have never forgotten it. Go on." The captain pointed without speaking to the pillows of her couch. She understood him, and shuddered. "Suffocation! — that is indeed a death of struggles! Four men to stifle down the breath of one helpless woman! O, no! — no!"

"The castle well is deep, — it is full of water, — but that, too, is a fearful death," said the same man, his aspect softening more and more.

Joanna paused; — for a moment the innate love of life stirred in her heart. "If yonder misguided prince should repent!" said she; "he was ever the victim

of impulse. He is violent as the winds, and as unsteady. Two hours' delay may bring countermanding orders."

The man shook his head impatiently, and darted an anxious glance at the door, from whence a harsh voice was heard exclaiming, — "Stilicho, — speed! speed! I charge you." The relenting murderer remembered his price, and hastening to the door received from the hands of some unseen person a silver cup, which he presented to the queen, saying in a low voice, — "Let this be your choice, — it is sure, but quiet."

"What! by my own hand?"

"If you reject the cup, remember how rudely the deed must be done. There is no escape, — no delay possible. Spare me, noble lady, the most hateful part of my vile office. I was not always what I now am; and my heart once more beats with the feelings of a man. I conjure you, force me not to order those degraded wretches to lay hands upon you."

"He has chosen his instrument ill," said Joanna, searching the countenance of the Hungarian with a lingering hope.

"No," replied he, averting his face; "I cannot save you, — and time presses."

Joanna's eyes filled with tears as she took the cup, and said solemnly, — "Appear not at the judgment-seat against him who has laid this burden on thy soul! O my unhappy, parricidal child! I bow to

the dreadful necessity, and choose as best I may. The deed is not mine; I only strive to meet, becomingly, the death I cannot avoid. Even in this awful moment, let me not forget to thank him who performs his task with no brutal roughness. Is it forbidden me to hope for the rites of religion? Is there no priest sent to shrive the departing soul?" Stilicho signified to her that there was not. An expression of bitter disappointment escaped her: — "I would fain have manifested my reverence for religion with the last act of my life. It is well, — all is well. There is mercy inexhaustible, to which my heart whispers that even the unshriven sinner may appeal."

So saying, she sunk on her knees, lost in devotion. There was no agitation perceptible in her frame; she seemed about to commend herself calmly to Divine protection, at the approach of quiet sleep; and after a brief exercise of the spirit, she again rose with an almost superhuman dignity in her motions. "I am strengthened; — I am ready!" said she; and throwing back the locks which concealed her countenance, bright already with the hues of immortality, she lifted the cup of poison, and for a moment surveyed the dark liquor it contained earnestly. As she raised it to her lips, the door opposite opened, and Father Matteo presented himself, haggard with anxiety and impatience, and ready to utter one exclamation of triumphant revenge as he looked on her despair. She paused only to greet him with a smile of celestial

sweetness. "Father! there is no pride, no anger, on the grave's brink! Tell him I forgive him, — that I have prayed for him, — and may God pardon you all!" With these words, she drank the deadly liquor to its dregs, and then regarded the group with the same heavenly serenity as before.

The monk stood cowed, — trembling, — before her. He had not intended to witness such a scene; and so unexpected, so unearthly, was the aspect of his victim, as she stood full in the stream of red sunlight from the eastern window, which seemed to cast a glory round her brows, — so touching, yet so sublime, was the sweetness of her address to him, that, for the first time in his life, he felt that he had a *conscience*, — a fearful thing to deal with; for the first time in his life, the majesty of virtue broke upon his mind. One moment he stood in dumb horror, his knees knocking together, and then, turning about, he fled, panic-stricken, from the walls of Il Muro. His horse had dropped under him at its gates on his arrival, and he rushed wildly down the mountain on foot, a thousand passions making a pandemonium of his breast. His fatal rencounter with Durazzo has been described.

For a short space after the departure of the monk, an awful stillness was in the chamber of crime. The three Hungarians, whose services the use of the poison had rendered needless, retired at a signal from their leader; the just risen sun looked in upon the motionless queen, who had seated herself near the

open window, and, with her eyes fixed upon the crucifix, appeared again absorbed in mental exercises most fitting her condition; while Stilicho leaned against the doorway, struggling with the new and strange sentiments of reverence and compassion, which the events of this day had developed in a bosom not entirely hardened. Suddenly Joanna uttered a faint cry of pain, putting her hand to her side; but as the Hungarian started involuntarily forward, she smiled sadly, and said, "It is gone; — it must return again; but it is gone for the present. I would say one thing more before my tongue shall lose its office. They have doubtless bound you to secrecy. Keep your vow. A dying woman adjures you to spare the fame of her murderer, — for the sake of his innocent wife and children. Tell no man that my death-arrow came from the hand that should have closed my dying eyes with filial tenderness. Alas, Charles, — the draught was sweet compared with the gall of that thought! You promise me? — that is well. It is better my people should believe that I sickened, and died, and went calmly to my rest. It is true; I am ill, — I am ill! Would it had been sent of God! but I can bear it patiently."

She then leaned against the high-backed chair, and closing her eyes meekly, she pressed the emblem of her faith to her lips; but another stab of pain soon forced her to moan aloud, and as she looked upward imploringly to heaven, Stilicho saw that her pale-

ness had increased. Falling on his knees before her, he exclaimed, — "Let me depart. I cannot bear it. I have looked on death many a time, — but not on such as this. Let me depart!"

Compassionately the queen turned to the subdued man of guilt, as she answered, — "Ay, it is better that you should go. Forbid my women to come hither till noonday; then they will find me sleeping indeed. I would that no heart should be wrung by witnessing the sufferings through which I must pass. Will they be long, think you?"

"I know not," said Stilicho; "the monk prepared the draught."

"Why do I ask?" added Joanna. "Eternity alone is long; moments and hours are nothing to me now. O, begone! these pangs come fast and keen. Repent, — and be forgiven. Trust not the absolution of priests. Nay; *I* forgive you, but that, too, is the forgiveness of frail humanity, — of kindred dust. Go; for the venom works fast." Stilicho saw tokens of its dreadful efficiency in the increasing lividness of her complexion and in her dilating eyeballs. He, too, hurried, shuddering, from her presence; — and Joanna of Naples was left to struggle alone with death!

Half an hour passed away; she still breathed; but her limbs were becoming cold and lifeless; stupor was upon her open but dull organs of vision, and her arms hung down powerless by her side; yet consciousness had not altogether left her. Her lips

moved occasionally, and a gleam of intelligence now and then shot from those orbs, which once beamed light from the pure soul within; the spirit seemed loath to quit its fair shrine. At last the sacred stillness was again broken by the sound of approaching footsteps. The queen heard them; there was something familiar in the sound. She struggled to rise; and as she sat upright, stiff, and with the countenance of a corpse, Charles of Durazzo appeared on the threshold, himself hardly wearing the semblance of a living man, so wan and spectre-like was his aspect. With an unearthly cry he rushed forward and fell at her feet, — and then, suddenly rising again, exclaimed, — "Thou art not dying, — thou must not die!" He looked wildly about the apartment, — "I see them not; I see no mark of intrusion here, — I am not, then, too late! Thou art ill, my mother?"

"Ay, ill unto death, Charles! Thou hast called me back from its shadows; but they gather, — they gather." Her speech faltered, and her sight grew dim again; but she pointed to the silver cup on the table. Charles looked at it, — at his expiring benefactress; there was unutterable anguish on his face, and he covered it with his hands; but a bright smile irradiated the features of the queen, as she murmured, — "God hath spared my reason, — and I see thee mourn thy crime. Could I but have spoken one word to my brave husband, — to my sweet Margaret! To die is not dreadful, Charles! Heaven hath permitted me to behold thy tears, — and I go where

there is mercy. I would not return, — I would not return!" The words died inarticulately on her lips, as thus, thoughtful of others to the last, she soothed the sinner's remorse. Charles endeavoured to support her, when, writhing with a sudden return of pain, she attempted to sink on her knees, but in the effort fell heavily forward from his enfeebled arms, and lay dead at the feet of her murderer!

The Hungarians had been guided down a shorter path to the valley by some mountaineers; and when the wretched Durazzo once more reached the monastery, a rumor was already circulating, that the queen had died of a sudden illness. Margaret had heard and understood it, and, shunning her guilty husband, was already on her way to take shelter in a distant convent. Once in her after life she appears on the page of history, as regent during her son's minority. The young Giovanni, alienated from the master he had loved till so foul a crime repelled the most enduring affection, had fled to Otho, who, cured of his wounds and released from prison, was hurrying to join Louis of Anjou.

The body of the lamented Joanna lay in state in the church of Santa Chiara, bearing no external mark of violence; where the tears of a grateful and idolizing people bewailed her unmerited sorrows, and mothers, as they looked on her marble features, thinking that so much beauty, genius, magnanimity, and virtue would never again be vouchsafed to them in the form of an earthly sovereign, read the solemn lesson,

and forbore to ask of Heaven those external advantages for their children, which, even when combined with high moral qualities, had brought to one woman so little felicity.

But of her assassin, the pen of fiction shall not tell the tale of retribution. "After a turbulent and unhappy reign of three short years, he deemed himself securely fixed on the throne of Naples, and proceeded to Hungary to wrest the crown from Maria, the daughter and heiress of Louis of Hungary, the old enemy of Queen Joanna. The young queen of Hungary, who was then about fifteen, was of a generous, frank, and noble nature; but her mother, the regent Elizabeth, was more than a match for Durazzo in artifice and cruelty. By her machinations, he was decoyed into the apartment of Maria, and while he stood reading a paper, a gigantic Hungarian, secretly stationed for that purpose, felled him to the earth with his sabre. His death, however, was not instantaneous;—he lingered for two days in agonies, neglected and abandoned; at length his enemies, becoming impatient of his prolonged existence, and fearful of his recovery, caused him to be suffocated or strangled."

ELIZABETH CARTER.

PREFACE.

THIS sketch of Miss Carter was prepared some years ago, and intended as the first of a series, to be entitled, "Biographical Sketches of Six Distinguished English Ladies of the Last Century." Mrs. Barbauld, as the one best known to the modern public, should perhaps have been selected as the first for notice, but the author, hoping to complete the series, began chronologically. She has been obliged to relinquish the plan, but as the memoir of Miss Carter was ready for the press, she offers it, in hopes that a true portrait of a woman so truly wise and excellent may excite some interest and do some good among her young countrywomen.

ELIZABETH CARTER.

At the close of the last century, England could show among her females a circle whose qualities were of the highest order, and whose names ought not to pass entirely from the memory of man. Yet man, and woman too, are already forgetting them and their acquirements, and their virtues, as if all these things were given to bless but one generation, and to perish from earth, as the dust with which they were linked mingles with the grave soil.

Of these distinguished women, we would single out Miss Carter as the most remarkable, if not the most estimable. We would not speak of her as merely the most learned woman England ever knew, but as combining in herself many of the best and most elevated characteristics of woman, and therefore deserving the respect and love of her own sex, their study, their imitation, in some points at least.

She was born on the sixteenth of December, in the year 1717. Her father was a pious and learned clergyman of the Established Church, living at Deal,

on the southeastern coast of England. She was left motherless at the age of ten; but her father formed a second connection, which seems to have been a judicious and happy one, and to have exerted a favorable influence upon the character of Elizabeth. It was the plan of Dr. Carter to give his daughters, as well as his sons, a classical education. But Elizabeth was not a genius. She had not a quick memory, and the study of Latin and Greek cost her such severe application, that her father himself changed his purpose and wish, dissuading her zealously from these pursuits. But she loved knowledge, and loved to overcome difficulty. She had a spirit of patient, indefatigable toil. All that is thus acquired is acquired thoroughly; and the foundations of her learning were laid deep and solid. Her perseverance without the stimulus of rapid success, or parental urgency, shows her firmness of purpose, and the result is full of encouragement for those easily disheartened by their want of brilliant capacity.

With all this love and power of close application, she had a great flow of spirits, which were held in restraint only by the silken bonds of discretion. Her father was no formalist. He enjoyed her liveliness, and mingled in her pleasures when he could, feeling truly that small harm can befall the young, where a parent shares alike their gravest and gayest pursuits.

She made an attempt once in her life to ascertain whether she had a talent for drawing. We are bound, perhaps, to seek whatever acquisitions of knowledge

or accomplishment may come within our reach, both for the development of our whole nature, and with a view to various unforeseen emergencies of life, in which they may become pleasant or useful resources. But soon discovering her own deficiency, she had too much good sense to persevere, deeming no mere accomplishment worthy the immense sacrifice of time it must require from those who have not a decided talent for it. She took more pains to learn music, but failed here also. French she spoke fluently through life, having been sent to pass a year in the family of a French refugee minister, to acquire it. The sciences, with the exception of their stately queen, Astronomy, do not appear to have interested her so deeply as the languages; yet she was too true a lover of all knowledge to neglect them. In giving a lively account to some young friend of her having "fallen in love with a Dutchman," she states that her cure was effected by "a dose of Algebra, fasting."

She acquired the Italian, Spanish, and German languages by her own unaided efforts, at a very youthful age, the Portuguese at a later period, and still later she marched up alone to attack the wild, solitary fortress of the Arabic. Through life she made a practice of reading a portion of Hebrew daily when in health. It seems not unlikely that the difficulties she early encountered arose, in some degree, from her rejection of those humble but invaluable ladders to knowledge, grammars. Since she was not

one to be discouraged by the dryness of learning declensions and conjugations, we are at a loss to understand how she fell into a mistake which involved so much unnecessary expense of time and labor.

She committed a more serious error in studying late at night, binding wet towels around her head, and chewing green tea to keep herself awake. That Elizabeth Carter should have sinned in the slightest degree against the laws of our physical nature does not prove that she was deficient in conscientiousness on this important point, but only that the subject was not well understood in those days. Could the pages of Combe have been placed in her youthful hands, she would have made no false balance of literary progress against health, and the headaches which so often racked her brain through a long life probably would have been unknown to her. Those who set so just a value on time as she did must see the importance of avoiding an evil that may occasionally incapacitate them for useful employment. There is a terrible waste of time occasioned by sickness, that might have been avoided.

We will now give a passage from the biography by her nephew, which, brief as it is, we consider of high importance. "She found time to work a great deal at her needle, not only for herself, but the family; and this even when in London, for it appears from one of her father's letters, that, when one of her brothers had new shirts, some of them were sent to her to make there." We doubt whether, among the

changes that one hundred years have produced, it would now be easy to find a literary young lady visiting London, and moving in no humble circles, actually making shirts for her rustic brothers with her own fair hands.

In personal appearance, Miss Carter was prepossessing. Although her figure was indifferent, her complexion was clear and fair, her teeth white, her hair curling, and her features expressive. If they truly expressed the mind and heart within, — and how often does the soul indeed mould the face, and look out from the eyes of an artless girl! — she must have had power to arrest the gaze even of a ball-room lounger. It would be a serious omission to say nothing of her manners, so often does winning deportment exercise the magic that beauty is apt to deem exclusively her own. She was near-sighted; but that this could have given her no ungraceful awkwardness is evident from the readiness with which she became a favorite. Acquaintances speedily were converted into friends, and, in some instances, friends into lovers. There must have been something peculiarly engaging about her; her fortune could have held out no temptations, and a lady's Greek and Latin have never been suspected of winning hearts; yet she had many admirers, and her celibacy was unquestionably a matter of choice.

To describe Miss Carter as she was in her youth, and not speak of her piety, would leave her portrait barely sketched; the rich coloring must come from

the skies. A mild light seems to have shone in upon her young mind from the Scriptures, and her character borrowed from it that beautiful tone which makes it so pleasant an object of contemplation. There was nothing in it dazzling, nothing overstrained. She was probably not often thrown in the way of Dissenters, and seems to have contented herself with acting up to what she had been taught, as became a meek and devout young Christian. Quiet, earnest piety was the foundation of her religious character, the best foundation it could have; and to this habit of mind we can alone attribute the perfect humility with which she bore that worst trial of the young, flattery. When the tongues of learned men told her what she was, in no measured terms of admiration, we believe that her devout heart whispered, — "To God be the glory." Among the means she used to keep the flame ever burning on its secret altar, were daily study of the Scriptures and the assiduous perusal of sermons and other religious works. As a peculiarity most worthy of imitation, and indicative of the serious spirit in which she listened to the preached word, let us mention that "she was never known to find fault with any sermon in which the doctrine was that of the Gospel, and in which the moral and religious duties were properly enforced."

Before she had reached her seventeenth birthday, she had translated the thirtieth Ode of Anacreon ably, and her literary reputation had begun to spread. Her brother writes from Canterbury school, that he had

"translated one of the Odes of Horace so well, it was thought to have been done by her." She appeared first before the public in the Gentleman's Magazine, in which she wrote acceptably, though not often.

From the age of eighteen she visited much in London, and early became acquainted with a young man, whose rare merit she appreciated long before the signet of fame was set upon it, and whose growing reputation she must have watched with peculiar interest. Her father thus writes to her: — "You mention Johnson; that is a name with which I am wholly unacquainted. Neither his scholastic, critical, nor poetical character ever reached my ears. I a little suspect his judgment, if he is fond of Martial." Dr. Johnson always manifested a respect in his deportment towards Miss Carter, unmarked by his occasional rudeness to others of her sex; an additional proof that there must have been something gentle and lady-like in her manners. A rough, strong, fearless character, such as his, was more likely to be softened than awed into uniform civility.

Pope, nearly fifty years of age, was the poet of the day, when Miss Carter published her translation of a critique upon the "Essay on Man," by Cronsaz, in which she attempted to qualify the severity of the author's criticism in her notes. No intimacy ensued between her and the irritable poet; and certainly his treatment of Lady Montague had no tendency to lure another young female upon the quicksands of

such dangerous intercourse. She published several small works, of which she afterwards thought little; but they brought upon her a torrent of adulation, which would have seriously injured a mind less strong, and a heart less pious. The most extravagant of her flatterers, perhaps, was one whose misfortunes scarcely overcame her dislike, and gained her pity, and who sought in vain for the honor of intimacy. This was the celebrated Savage, introduced to her by Dr. Johnson, when she was about twenty-two; and she showed singular moral strength for her years in thus repelling the praise of a man of genius and of sorrows, on account of his dissipations. Would that in this noble self-respect, at least, she might find imitators! It proved, too, that, while she could appreciate Johnson, she had no disposition to put the leading-strings of her judgment into his hands; and that, while she bowed to his towering intellect, she remained aloof from his prejudices and partialities.

Another occurrence of the same year must have been far more gratifying to one who measured praise by the genuine respectability of the quarter whence it came. There was in Germany at this time a young man of nearly her own age, whose wonderful attainments had already secured him fame, Francis Baratier, an early and ripe scholar. This youth no sooner heard of the learned English maiden, than he was desirous of opening a literary correspondence with her. His wish was granted; but it was not

according to the order of Providence that this delightful intercourse should proceed, or that the two young persons should ever behold each other in this world. Baratier had been a prodigy in his childhood, and his race was soon run; the fatal precocity of his intellect had been the harbinger of decay. His first letter to her is dated February 24th, 1739. He was already ill, and in the following October the volumes he had loved were closed for ever, and a weeping father followed the boy of whom he had been so proud to an untimely grave.

Two years after this, Miss Carter formed the strongest intimacy of her life. It was one to which the name of friendship in its highest sense may be given; there was the "idem velle atque nolle" of Sallust; but high and holy were the things that both loved, the base and unworthy all that they disliked. Miss Catharine Talbot was highly connected, accomplished, admired in the great world, yet bearing in the depths of her soul treasures like ocean pearls, of which the great world knew little. Miss Carter seems to have indulged an almost romantic eagerness to become acquainted with a lady she had heard so highly extolled; and, strange to tell, these high-flown, youthful anticipations gave birth to no disappointment. She thus breaks out in a letter to a mutual friend, after having seen Miss Talbot at church: — "Miss Talbot is absolutely my passion; I think of her all day, dream of her all night; must I never hope for a nearer view, till I meet her glittering

among the stars in a future state of being?" Their acquaintance commenced immediately afterwards. Drawn and held together by so many noble sympathies, these two gifted young women became intimate with a suddenness which in ordinary cases would be imprudent, and fraught with future repentance. Their correspondence was highly interesting, and continued whenever they were separated, till one of the parties was removed by death. "It was never checked by even the slightest coldness or estrangement."

The immediate result of this acquaintance was, that Miss Carter was introduced to the celebrated Dr. Secker, with whom Miss Talbot and her widowed mother resided; and her acquaintance in the best circles of London rapidly increased. She still, however, passed her summers at Deal, in the happiest of domestic circles, a blessing to each individual connected with her. The fame of her learning had long since thrown her simple town's people into some perplexity; they had begun to think her ambition and her achievements illimitable, and one of her friends had to contend stoutly against a report that she "wanted to be member of Parliament." But the simplicity of her heart remaining unalloyed, at home and abroad, she was no less beloved than admired.

Those terrible headaches had now seized upon her, which continued to mingle alloy with her purest enjoyments through life; so that, whether travelling, studying, or partaking of social pleasures, she was

perpetually liable to be driven to her pillow by severe pain. As a proof that these headaches were the result of early mismanagement, it may be remarked that exercise in the open air kept them off; and as she was a good walker, fearless of cold, and delighting to tread the new-fallen snow, she often escaped from her foe by resolutely rambling abroad even in the depth of winter. Yet it was long before she formed a system on her experience.

In the winter of 1744 and 1745, she was at Deal during some part of the season, when an invasion of the French was expected on that part of the coast. So various are the ways in which individuals are affected by public affairs, that we find it difficult to realize, as we read the letters of a quiet family in the South of England at this period, that this was the epoch selected by the author of Waverley. There is the thrilling date, the "year '45," and the name of the Pretender; but a set of objects are brought before us, very different from the romantic and glittering phantasmagoria conjured up by the wand of the Scottish Prospero. A letter she wrote after an alarm had been given in the town expresses not so much apprehension as indignation at the indifferent manner in which the place was prepared for an attack.

In the summer of 1746, she gives Miss Talbot an account of her mode of occupying herself, in a sprightly letter. That mode seems to have been somewhat desultory; which leaves us to marvel at the great results. But it must be remembered that

she was now nearly twenty-nine, and that, during the usually giddy period of youth, she had been in the habit of studying intensely for many hours at a time. As she had advanced so far as to leave difficulty behind, the same application was no longer necessary. Her rule was, "to read after breakfast something in every language with which she was acquainted, so that she never allowed herself to forget what she had once known." Of this we would speak with peculiar commendation. We have often heard the careless exclamation, "O, I used to play and sing," — or "read Italian and German," — or the like, — "but I have forgotten all I ever knew of it." Few, unless it be the busy mothers of large families, have a sufficient excuse for thus wasting *past* time. It is a property of knowledge, that, when once gained, it is kept at small expense, and whatever has cost time in the acquisition should be worth keeping.

While in London, Miss Carter gave her hours to the society of such individuals as Bishop Butler, the Bishop of Oxford, Dr. Johnson, Richardson, Mrs. Montague, and others of the wisest and best whom England could produce. Intercourse with such a world could not enervate her mind. She went much abroad, but not to fritter away her time in frivolous conversation; and, as she mingled freely with the most intelligent persons of her day, the work of her mental improvement was not likely to be stayed. There was no better way in which it could have been carried on, after the solid foundation had been *laid.*

About the year 1749 commenced the most interesting portion of Miss Carter's life, — the period when she was to reap a reward for her past toils more delightful than the pleasure of acquisition, or growth of intellect, in the consciousness of usefulness. She now engaged with her whole heart in an employment that for a few years confined her almost wholly to Deal. Her father's fortune was small, his family numerous, and as he wished to bring up his youngest son to the Church, from economical motives he began to educate the boy himself. But his health and spirits failed, and the prospects of young Henry were in jeopardy, when his sister Elizabeth, the daughter of another mother, took up the task with an able hand. From this time, her many friends in London, with the beloved Miss Talbot at their head, in vain urged her to pass the winter among them as usual. She had not taken up the business of education as a mere summer recreation, and would not trifle with the precious time of her pupil. This was her real business, and engrossed her chief interest for several years. But for the gratification of Dr. Secker and Miss Talbot, while devoted to this unostentatious home duty, she beguiled her leisure hours with translating Epictetus. And this employment, taken up accidentally, and partly for mere recreation, eventually made known her great acquirements to the world, and was the source of her reputation.

Much good-humored discussion passed between her and Dr. Secker as to the style she should adopt

in her translation, the worthy Bishop complaining that she was disposed to "put Epictetus into a laced coat." He says in one of his letters, — "Abruptness and want of ornament often add much force and persuasion to what is said; they show the speaker to be in earnest, which hath the greatest weight of any thing." That Miss Carter was independent is shown by her having at first maintained her predilection for a free and elegant translation against such learned authority; that she was not obstinate is shown by her having finally adopted the plainer style, so urgently recommended. Most readers of these silken-phrased days would probably wish that she had adhered to the graceful, rather than the literal.

She was now immersed in classical study. It was heart-work as well as head-work with her, for her best affections were called out while training her young brother for his intended lot, and while she went on with her translation, a delightful stimulus was supplied by friendship. Nothing can afford a writer more wholesome excitement, than an opportunity of submitting his manuscript pages, fresh from the hasty pen, to the cool inspection of a judicious and candid friend. In such a case, criticism never wounds, and praise gives the much needed encouragement. Melancholy would be the annals of those obscure and solitary students, who have dug in the mines of literature through long, desolate years, uncheered by the voice of sympathy, conscious, perhaps,

of the brighter regions in which their more favored brethren were moving, but themselves never catching the beam of a human smile on their lonely tasks.

Miss Carter was in her thirty-second year when the singular amusement for her leisure hours was devised, and as she was too conscientious to bestow any but leisure hours upon it, the work did not advance rapidly. In the mean time her Ode to Wisdom, then much admired, received the compliment of being translated into mellifluous Dutch.

After an absence of four years, she once more visited London, where two days of her sojourn were passed with Richardson, just before the publication of Sir Charles Grandison; and as she esteemed that amiable author highly, the brief visit gave her peculiar pleasure. She returned to Deal with the intention of preparing her translation for publication, at the earnest instigation of her friends. Her headaches, however, now became distressing, and the illness of some who were nearest and dearest to her engrossed her time and thoughts. In the mean time, a few of her influential friends in London entertained a project for obtaining her a place at court. A situation more uncongenial with her tastes could hardly be imagined. She expressed the strongest repugnance to being the subject of such a scheme. Her precarious health and her diffidence seem to have formed powerful objections in her own mind to a court life, and she adds in a letter to Miss Talbot, — "I cannot guess precisely what is the office to which,

if there be any truth in this report, I should be named. If it should be only to teach the children to read, would it not be a more eligible life to be a country schoolmistress, 'with apron blue'? If for any thing higher, it would be forming too advantageous an opinion of myself to think I was qualified for it. Of Latin and Greek I might perhaps be able to give them some notions; but this surely cannot be the scheme, for since the days of Queen Elizabeth and Lady Jane Grey, who ever thought of teaching princesses Latin and Greek. But I am in hopes it will all blow over, for this very plan was mentioned some years ago."

Her own corrections of the translation were at last completed, and the sheets sent to Dr. Secker. She was urged to prepare a life of Epictetus, to which she thus replies: — "Whoever that somebody or other is, that is to write the life of Epictetus, seeing I have a dozen shirts to make, I do opine, dear Miss Talbot, that it cannot be I."

When the work was ready for the press, a new difficulty arose in the minds of the pious friends. The spirit of Voltaire and Bolingbroke was abroad, and timid Christians were full of alarm. Miss Talbot became uneasy lest the publication of such a noble *heathen* system of morality, at this crisis, might supply weapons for the foes of Christianity. Miss Carter was not at first infected with the panic; she could not believe that "infidelity could ever arise from admiration of the sentiments of the wise, good,

and religious among the heathen philosophers." The Bishop was next seized with misgivings, and as she considered him better acquainted with human nature than her female adviser, his scruples nearly terrified the poor translator out of publication. She was finally induced by them to prepare a Life of Epictetus and Notes, intended to counteract any injurious effect of the text upon minds in an unsettled state as to belief.

It must be remarked, that her author contained nothing immoral or profane; such a writer would never have been chosen as a favorite subject of study by a woman of the strictest principles. Her friends objected to the display of a mere moral system so captivating, at a conjuncture when many were ready to throw off all religion, and seize on any decent substitute.

Miss Carter made the work complete by adding translations of the Manual of Epictetus, and his Fragments. At last, in May, 1756, she was doubly set free; the tasks begun together were completed together. Her brother was examined for the University. She waited for the result with a natural solicitude; her father himself communicated the joyful tidings of the young man's honorable admission; and the surprise of the learned was great when they were told by whom the student had been prepared.

At the same time she was prepared to lay before the world those sublime doctrines of the Stoic philosopher, till now locked up from the curiosity of all

save the erudite, which had enabled the old man Epictetus to bear up under a lot that seemed to the beholder most wretched. He was a slave's slave, for his master was one of the courtiers of Nero; he had been crippled in youth, he spent his days in extreme poverty, and when his venerable head was laid low, he left behind him the secret of his perpetual cheerfulness in the treatise which was now to be introduced to the Christian world. Miss Carter felt that, if an unbiased public should decide that she had failed in her undertaking, the charge of presumption would lie on her with double weight, because she was a woman.

The work appeared in 1758, nearly nine years from its commencement. It was published by subscription, in opposition, however, to Miss Carter's earnest remonstrances. Its reception was such as to justify the most sanguine expectation of her friends; and she was a gainer of one thousand pounds; a circumstance of no small import to one who was dependent on a father now advanced in life, and far from wealthy. Her biographer remarks, that "the book was much admired, and talked of as soon as published, and the extraordinary circumstance of a translation from the Greek of so difficult an author by a woman, made a great noise all over Europe. Even in Russia an account was published of her."

During the next two or three years, whether in London or Deal, Miss Carter seemed to bask in the sunshine of literary reputation, friendship, and do-

mestic happiness. But she was doomed to realize that Divine Wisdom does not permit earth's most innocent enjoyments to be unalloyed. Her health failed, and even her spirits yielded to the depressing and mysterious influences of pain. She was at last restored by a visit at Tunbridge, in the society of Mrs. Montague, Lord Bath, and Lord Lyttelton. While at this fashionable watering-place, she was persuaded to publish some poems, and with this little work ended her short career before the public. She had no passion for authorship, none of that desire to keep herself before the eye of the world at all hazards, by which so many are tempted to write down and stifle their own literary reputation. And she was quite aware that a poetical genius was not among her gifts.

In the following year, the competency which Miss Carter had honorably acquired enabled her to make such arrangements for her mode of life as best suited her tastes. The step-mother, with whom she had lived so happily, was now gone to her rest; her father had not a house of his own, and was exposed in his old age to the inconveniences of frequent removals from one dwelling to another. Miss Carter consulted his comfort no less than her own, in purchasing a house. It was at the southern end of the town of Deal, and commanded a fine view of country and ocean, whose broad and restless surface she loved to contemplate. While the premises were under repair, she went abroad with Lord Bath and Mrs. Montague;

for the war having just ended, the Continent was again open to the English; and that travel-loving nation were never backward to embrace the opportunity of rushing across the Channel.

The love between Miss Carter and the wealthy Mrs. Montague was that of sisters, and the purse of the latter defrayed the expense of this tour. Yet no painful feelings, belonging to the obliger and the obliged, seem to have ever arisen between these amiable and high-minded women. Among such alone can similar transactions occur without after jealousies and difficulties. The quiet and solitary spinster enjoyed the excursion highly, for her wanderings even on British ground had been few and limited. In comparing the state of things in those days with the present restlessness of society, when the facilities of travelling have set all manner of men and women flying about the world as indefatigably and seemingly with as little purpose as motes dancing in the atmosphere, we cannot help wondering how many of these sight-seers are duly qualified for travelling. The evident waste of privilege on some of these rovers of sea and land has made us wish there were a customary preparation for travel as for college.

In September she returned to Deal, and settled herself down happily as her father's housekeeper, during the principal part of the year. The good old man had his separate library, and through the studious hours of the day they pursued their respective occupations apart; but they always met at their

cheerful meals, when the similarity of their tastes and their mutual affection must have rendered their daily intercourse a source of much quiet enjoyment. Throughout the whole of her voluminous correspondence with her friends, we continually find affectionate allusions to her father, brothers, sisters, and their children. Such passages, now that the hand which wrote them is cold, and the eyes which first read them are all sealed, afford us delightful glimpses into virtuous and peaceful homes long since broken up. She by no means reserved the agreeable powers which Heaven had bestowed on her for the cultivated circles. She had none of the intellectual pride which stoops not even to gather a flower; but in the neighbourhood where she had been born and brought up, where her father had preached and his people had shown both him and her such unremitting kindness, she maintained an unceremonious intercourse. She passed from the company of the great and good, to that of the good only, with a truly Christian simplicity. On these occasions her genius and acquirements seemed to sleep. Her nephew tells us that many were long acquainted with her, "who never knew, till told by others, that she was acquainted with any language but her own"; yet, in the partial opinion of Dr. Drake, she was probably the best linguist England had produced, with the exception of Sir William Jones. She considered, in her own words, that "every situation in life, with respect to society, requires a certain expense and establish-

ment"; but still she dressed plainly, only taking care to ward off the charge which might lightly be brought against her as a learned lady, by the most scrupulous neatness. By the judicious regulation of her expenses, she was enabled, even while associating with the opulent, to assist the indigent, to make presents to her relatives, and to friends poorer than herself. Never could she have accomplished all this while mingling with the aristocracy of England, if she had not been above striving to cope with wealth in externals. Had she manifested such an inclination, never probably would she have received from that proud aristocracy half so much respect. As it was, she found both gentle and noble willing to meet her on her own ground. To the great regularity of her habits, which she maintained even when in London, she probably owed the calmness of her mind and the length of days which infirmity had rendered a boon little likely to be granted. With all her strictness and independence of custom, that she was never taxed with eccentricity shows how exactly she knew when it was right to conform to the ways of the world, and when to depart from them.

Charges Street, Piccadilly, was her London residence, and it was the practice of the friends with whom she always dined to send her home in their carriages at her own hour, ten in the evening. She thus avoided the risk of outstaying her welcome under the roof of any friend, and maintained her independence, while she participated in all the intellectual

pleasures of such society as continually sought her. Her journeys to and from London were performed in the stage-coach; and on these occasions she sometimes met with amusing adventures. Once she encountered a stranger, who manifested an inquisitiveness that in a son of New England would hardly escape animadversion. "He fixed his eyes on my face, and inquired if I was not one of the Carters, to which I answered, 'Yes'; about half an hour after he looked at me again, and broke forth, 'Why, surely you cannot be the lady that is reported to be so well read in the mathematics, that she has puzzled all the naval officers, and a gentleman came on purpose to have a conference with her about it!' — 'No, indeed, Sir, I am not.' — 'Was it any of your sisters then?' — 'Not that I know.' After many interrogations, he seemed very unquiet and dissatisfied with my answers, and I believe the good man is to this hour in a perplexity whether I am the lady that puzzled all the naval officers or not." — In one of her letters from Deal, too, she gayly expresses her satisfaction that the Witch Act had been repealed; far and wide the country people believed that she had the power of predicting the changes of the weather, and she observes, that, "from my foretelling a storm, it will be a mighty easy and natural transition to my raising it."

When Miss Carter had thus arranged her plans of life, she did not forget the awful uncertainty of that life. She no sooner had property to bequeathe, than

she made her will, with a promptitude which showed how much she had the interest of others at heart, and how little she shrunk from contemplating the solemn closing of all earthly duties. This is one instance among many which we would gladly select, as exemplifying the peculiarity of Elizabeth Carter's character. We feel that we can hardly dwell too much on the fact, that she did not surpass her sex in genius, that it was not by the brilliancy of her talents that she commanded universal respect. It was by higher attributes. Her strong mind was admirably regulated. Her great learning was the fruit of patient toil; but no duties were overlooked or slighted, no acquirement or object was suffered to monopolize her interest. She never acted rashly, she never procrastinated, she was not governed by mere impulse. She was emphatically a female sage, and the high quality of wisdom was in her adorned with all Christian graces. In short, she seems to have truly felt what an excellent female writer of her own time has so well expressed, — "What a woman knows is of little consequence compared with what a woman is."

Her life henceforward flowed on in a useful but quiet routine. Her days were singularly prosperous; the only sorrows which befell her came in the ordinary course of events, and it was long before the golden links began to drop from the chain of her friendships. But those whom she valued were now to commence the long series of departures which at last left her the survivor of each early friend. The

beneficial effect of the Spa-waters on Lord Bath's health had been only temporary; in the summer after his tour on the Continent with the Montagues and Miss Carter, this child of prosperity expired, advanced in life, but unimpaired in his faculties. It was of him that Sir Robert Walpole declared, that he "dreaded the tongue of Pulteney more than another man's sword." Struggling against that able minister, he had indeed fought much on the dismal arena of politics. "Non ragionam di' lor, ma guarda e passa." Amiable, disinterested, highly polished, and exemplary, he had won the esteem of Miss Carter, and in him she mourned a zealous friend. Her opportunities of observing his private character were such as do not often occur, where the parties are both unmarried. After his death she remarked, that, during the months in which she had been his fellow-traveller, she "did not recollect a single instance of peevishness," and that she "never heard him use a harsh or even uncivil expression to any of his servants." This was better than Chesterfieldian politeness.

Legacies from friends increased Miss Carter's means of doing good. At Deal she became almost an object of veneration, among the families of the hardy seafaring people on the coast. It was not, however, mere gratitude for her bounty that endeared her to these simple-minded persons. However indistinct were their conceptions of the nature of her greatness, they saw that she was looked up to by those

whose external appendages of wealth and rank they could fully comprehend, and her kind, unpretending manners under such circumstances had a peculiar charm. Her influence among them was never abused. On the contrary, the temptations to which the habits and situation of this part of the island exposed them were counteracted by Miss Carter in every possible manner. So great was her respect for the laws of the country, that, while many of her wealthier neighbours did not hesitate to "load their coaches with contraband goods," she never would purchase an article, even from a common store, which she suspected to have been smuggled. Yet, in compassion for the ignorance of the poorer classes, misled by the example of their superiors, she would extend her advice and assistance to the families of the wretched smugglers themselves in their seasons of distress.

We will remark here, that, although some of Miss Carter's intimacies lay among the distinguished political characters of the day, they kindled no fire of party spirit in her breast. She had her opinions; she thought Wilkes no patriot, and Churchill no poet; but her dislike of them was neither rancorous nor loquacious. She was a Greek scholar, but still a true retiring woman, and no politician.

That her mildness did not result from a phlegmatic temperament is shown by the generous warmth she manifested when Dr. Johnson was grossly assailed by newspaper writers, and by her use of such strong

expressions as the following, in speaking of one of her French contemporaries: — "By your account of Rousseau's book, I fear it is likely to do more harm than good, which seems to be the case with all his writings that I have seen. It is a pity he does not pursue his own favorite theory of running wild and grazing among the animals, whose morals would be in no danger of being relaxed by his stories, nor their principles poisoned by his philosophical whims."

The death of Dr. Secker, Archbishop of Canterbury, deprived her of one whom she had had cause to reverence and love for twenty years. Whatever may have been the opinion entertained of him by the Dissenters, in whose faith he had been brought up, and who could not but look on his frequent church preferments with a suspicious eye, his learning and abilities were great, his disposition benevolent, and his qualities as a friend admirable. Miss Carter mourned him deeply. Many of her happiest hours had been spent at Lambeth; and when her friend, Miss Talbot, left it with her mother, she, too, bade a last adieu to a spot almost sanctified in her eyes.

Soon after this bereavement, she lost an amiable female friend who had suffered much, and whom she had benefited much by her own lively temperament and animating Christian faith. Constitutional cheerfulness is not always regarded as it should be, as a trust, like intellectual power; an advantage bestowed not for our own enjoyment alone, but a thing which

may be made a blessing to our fellow-creatures, and for the right use of which we are therefore held responsible. Miss Carter poured the sunshine of her own happy spirit on hearts which had been darkened by ill health, sorrow, or that seemingly causeless melancholy which steals mysteriously over some sensitive minds, to be smiled, not chidden, away.

In this same year, 1769, an interruption occurred in her correspondence with Miss Talbot. The once fluent pen was checked, for one of the most dreadful maladies which assail this strange structure of the human body had long been secretly preying on her constitution, and the termination of her pangs approached. This exemplary woman had concealed from her aged mother the existence of a cancer in her side, from the kindest motives; but a few other friends and attendants knew her condition, among whom was Miss Carter. As the year 1770 opened, Miss Talbot escaped from the torments of her disease to receive the reward of her Christian patience.

Her death was a severe bereavement to Miss Carter. She writes on the subject to her various correspondents with expressions of deep grief, chastened by pious resignation; and thus alludes to the virtues of the departed in a letter to Mrs. Vesey: — "While she was in a mortal state, I was accustomed to look up to her as the most perfect pattern of goodness I ever knew; and now my thoughts pursue her into the world of glorified spirits with more awful impressions. I cannot help considering her sometimes

as more present to my view than when the veil of corporeal obstruction obscured my sight."

To a single woman, now advancing into the vale of years, it was a loss to be peculiarly felt; for bonds of almost sisterly sympathy were broken, and it was too late to weave them anew. But among other noble sources of consolation, Miss Carter turned herself to the task of cheering the heart-stricken parent of her friend; and letters passed constantly between her and the venerable Mrs. Talbot, for the twelve long years during which the widowed and childless lingered among scenes once so happy. She died at the age of ninety-two.

Although Miss Carter had ceased to come before the public, her pen was not idle; the published collections of her letters are voluminous; and these unstudied effusions all bear the stamp of good sense, learning, cheerfulness, an affectionate spirit, and piety. They are free from pedantry, vanity, and cant; they contain not a trace of envy or unkindness towards any human being; they are full of judicious criticisms, of allusions to passing events and distinguished characters of her time, which now have an historical interest; and they afford us many pleasant glimpses into the domestic manners of the day.

There is a passage in one of her letters to Mrs. Vesey, dated April, 1770, which we are tempted to quote, because it bears on a subject that has recently and justly attracted much attention, particularly in this country; we mean the relation between mistress

and servant. "My two damsels have behaved so wickedly during my absence, that no consideration of my own case ought to prevent my parting with them; and I am looking out for two others to supply their places, who know no earthly thing but how to speak truth and do as they are bid. One such prize I have found, and am watching for another equally ignorant. So you may easily imagine that I have too much employment, first in teaching myself, and then in teaching them the art and mystery of their business, to allow me to think of making any long excursion this summer. I ought to feel the less reluctance at the task which lies before me, as I have so little power of application to any studies that would be more amusing; and I take pleasure in the thought of endeavouring to make two fellow-creatures useful and happy. Nor am I discouraged by any former want of success. The trial is always a duty; and with success I have nothing to do."

According to her biographer, however, who had opportunities of knowing the fact, she was eminently successful in this department of usefulness; as we think any judicious woman must be, who sets out with such principles. Her servants were usually excellent and attached, seldom leaving her household except to be married. That she did not indolently or ignorantly leave matters to their management may be inferred from such passages as the following: — "I will write to Mrs. Chapone soon; but just now I am in a world of business and bustle, for we have

company to dinner, and I am 'Mungo here, Mungo there, Mungo everywhere'; so it is well I began my letter last night. Between walking before breakfast, presiding over the cookery, and paying a visit, as in duty bound, to Lady Camden, I have been as busy all the morning as if I had been actually doing a great deal." — "I have been necessarily confined at home with my two damsels; I hope in a few months they will have learned their business, and I be freed from the trouble of teaching it. My being used to a servant remarkably clever, who soon took all the fatigue from me, renders my present task more wearisome; but it must be done; and if they are good girls, as I hope and believe they are, they will amply repay me. It is very fit that there should sometimes be occasions to prove by more feeling arguments than mere speculation, how very much those who are placed in the higher classes of life are indebted, for a great part of their ease, leisure, and comfort, to those whose lot is fallen to them in the lower."

In short, in spite of her Greek and Arabic, and in spite of her fashionable London friends, she seems to have been much devoted through life to the duties of a housekeeper, an aunt, a sister, and a daughter. The Memoirs of her, which have so long been before the public, and from which the materials for this sketch are drawn, are from the pen of her eldest sister's son; he dwelt long under her immediate care, she assisted in his education, and he had the best possible chances of studying her character in her

most unguarded hours. We cannot help placing much confidence in the portrait he has sketched; and the perusal of her letters, with the allusions made to her by her contemporaries, confirms its fidelity.

In these letters, we find evidence of such a taste for the beautiful and picturesque as usually exists only in a highly poetical temperament, and we cannot help being surprised that her verse exhibits no stronger proof of it. Dwelling on the sea-coast, and looking from the apartment where she was accustomed to read and write out upon the changeful ocean, she seems to have fully enjoyed its varying beauty and sublimity. Almost every letter contains some casual allusion to the prospect before her, and not a phenomenon in the broad skies above escaped her observant eye. The gathering and the scattering storm are often sketched in a few happy phrases; and she has the art of painting, with a single felicitous epithet, that on which a less feeling writer might have wasted pages of verbose description: — "Yesterday afternoon we had a great storm, and a most noble preparation for it. I scarce ever saw the 'dread magnificence of Heaven' appear in a more awful form. The western horizon was involved in the deepest gloom, through which the lightning vibrated in a manner singularly beautiful. The great expanse of darkness was rendered the more solemn by a range of pale clouds of a remarkable color and form, by which it was bounded towards the east. The natural expectation from the appearance of such a sky

was thunder, but it ended in a most outrageous wind, which lasted about ten minutes, and then sank into a *sober rain.*"

"November 1st, 1769. I think, considering your reluctance to get up for the comet, you are scarcely worthy to hear of my celestial phenomenon, if I had not a need to tell it. I saw this morning a most extraordinary rainbow, as it was only of a single color. The sun was hardly above the sea; his orb was not visible, but concealed by a strong golden cloud, which formed a perfect arch in the east, of a pale orange color, extremely distinct. The appearance was very singular, and I thought myself in high luck to get a sight of it, for it did not last above two or three minutes; it vanished as soon as the sun had shaken off the clouds and shone out in full splendor."

As a specimen of her attention to those minor duties towards society from which some are apt to think celebrity may absolve them, we quote the following passage: — "June 20th, 1772. Indeed, my dear friend, I at this time feel strongly the force of the prejudice that one's own house is the best of all possible houses, as I have just returned from a visit which it cost me a great deal of exertion to pay. It is true I have a very laudable affection for *conversation;* but it is equally true that I mortally hate *talking;* and consequently I have no natural talent for a visit. Yet a visit is a part of life, a debt which in many cases one owes to the general relation of human creatures to one another; and which one has

no right to withhold, merely because it happens to contradict some more agreeble amusement. Well, — *quoad hoc*, — I have done my duty, and am flown back to the quiet and cheerfulness of my own little apartment."

While thus selecting a few brief extracts from Miss Carter's correspondence, which may afford a more distinct conception of her mind and heart than pages of description, we cannot omit one which shows a high degree of independence, and illustrates the noblest kind of independence. It must be remembered that Mrs. Montague, to whom she was writing, was rich, admired, and fashionable; and that her purse even had more than once contributed to Miss Carter's comfort and enjoyment. Yet, with mingled delicacy and frankness, she again and again warns this valued friend of the temptations which within and without are besetting her. "Indeed, I had not the least idea of being angry with you for wishing yourself at Almack's or Soho; for it certainly is not *to me* that you or any one else is accountable for any degree of time or attention which they think proper to bestow on such assemblies. Forgive me, my dear friend, if the tenderest concern for your virtue and happiness, joined to a persuasion that such superior talents and advantages demand a most watchful attention to every step you take, tempted me just to offer it as a subject for your consideration, how far your very frequent appearance might be right in mixed assemblies, and your example an encouragement to the general dissi-

pation of the world. But my judgment of the mischievous effects of this kind of life may very probably be wrong, and beyond a hint I seldom proceed. I have too much business in endeavouring to correct my own wrong dispositions, and to reform the faults and follies which I feel every hour rising, to allow me to indulge the vanity of thinking I have any right to dictate to others, and, least of all, to those who have distinguished powers of judging for themselves." In other letters she speaks more plainly; and the unbroken friendship of the parties shows that the *manner* of the thing could reconcile even the high-bred idol of fashion to judicious reproof.

In 1773, another breach was made in the circle of her dear friends, by the death of Lord Lyttelton. Such was the character of her intimacies, that, when she was called to mourn, society lamented with her over the loss of some exemplary individual. She gives us a beautiful delineation of this pattern for English nobility; and bestows on him a commendation rarely deserved, — "that amidst all the intricacies of this perplexed world, his heart preserved its native simplicity, and was as free from guile as that of a little infant."

Throughout the years 1773 and 1774, we find Miss Carter's mind much absorbed, and continually made anxious, by the increasing infirmities of her father. The old man had entered his eighty-seventh year, but the fond affection of his children could not yet spare him. Seldom can the age of the good parent

be "dark and unlovely," if God spare but his offspring to gather around his decrepitude.

Miss Carter concludes the letter in which she announces the death of her father to Mrs. Montague with the following words: — "At present, I have a sad, desolate feeling at my heart, and an oppressive weight on my spirits, that I cannot shake off; but this I trust will soon be relieved, and be succeeded by pleasing and comfortable sentiments of gratitude, respect, and affection to the memory of a father, to whom I had such uncommon and inexpressible obligations." That there are bonds of filial obligation, which nature tells us are alike strong in all cases, is true; but where the parental duties have been discharged with unusual ability and devotedness, there arise obligations which do indeed deserve to be called, "uncommon and inexpressible." Miss Carter realized this fully. It is difficult to judge how far her mature character was the result of a kindly constituted temperament, or self-cultivation, or of early parental discipline; but that the latter had a large share in the formation of her various excellences cannot be doubted by any who have been in the habit of watching the influences of home education.

From this time she was in one sense of the word *alone*. The regular companion of her existence, he who had dwelt from her earliest existence in the spot she called her home, was gone. To the unmarried woman, the presence of a parent is the essence of home; there is none like that of a parent's house.

But there was no loneliness of the heart for her. She took too deep an interest in the welfare of others to sink into gloom and apathy; literature and friendship occupied her mind and her affections; devout exercises and benevolent deeds kept her spirit in a heavenly frame; while her sister's children taught her the value of a blessed relationship, through which the childless carry down their love to another generation.

One of her objects of attention was a Benevolent Society, which made demands on time as well as money; and in charitable enterprises of this nature we find her engaged henceforward, with a quiet but constant interest.

In the year 1775, Mrs. Montague lost her worthy husband, and, as he left her sole mistress of a large fortune, she immediately settled an annuity on Miss Carter.

Her headaches, however, had now increased to a distressing degree. Yet, as the friends of her earlier days passed from the scene, and infirmity fixed upon her as her companion to the grave, her gentleness and cheerfulness attracted many of the young to soothe her decline. Religious books and the classics still were her favorite reading; and her remarks on French, Italian, and Spanish writers show that they formed a part of her customary studies. She was no admirer of the French tragedy. A true Englishwoman fresh and natural in her tastes, in vain did she strive to reconcile herself to the pompous declamation of

Racine; and at last she gave it up, playfully declaring to Mrs. Montague, — "If you beat me for it, I cannot help thinking that Pyrrhus and Alexander make love 'en petits maîtres,' and we should never guess who they were, if their names were not set to the pictures."

During the progress of the American Revolution, though she was no politician, her letters contain many interesting allusions to passing events. We read almost with curiosity the various rumors of success or defeat, the apprehensions with regard to the safety of one friend's son, or another's husband, — expressions of sympathy with the bereaved, speculations on the result of the unnatural contest, and comments on the failing health of Lord Chatham, — till the lapse of years is forgotten, we are carried back to the times of our fathers, and view the scene of their struggle as it were from the opposite shores of the Atlantic.

In the year 1778, we find a strong symptom of old age in the following passage: — "O lack! what writing, or, as somebody used to say, what *writation* it all is! You and I, my dear friend, have lived to see the mushroom growth of a new language in our country, filled with phrases which nobody could have understood when we were young." So murmured her old father, when, in his latter years, she would have persuaded him to read some then modern work. And the murmur is still heard from thousands who grew up among the phrases of which the retired authoress

complained, but love not fresh innovations, now that their own locks are growing gray.

In the year 1782, then at the age of sixty-five, Miss Carter was induced, very unwillingly, to accompany some friends to Paris; then a scene of luxury and gayety, which, even to the most thoughtful observer, gave little indication of the bloody calamities approaching. She did not enjoy this journey; and, in her homesickness, wrote to a friend, that she could not help longing for what she should "prefer to all the fine sights in the world, a view of the cliffs of Dover." Her sensibilities to the sublime and beautiful were not blunted by ill health, however, for she strikingly describes her impressions on viewing the Cathedral of Amiens.

In December, 1784, she thus alludes to the decease of another friend of many years: — "I see by the papers, Dr. Johnson is dead. In extent of learning and exquisite purity of moral writing, he has left no superior, and, I fear, very few equals. His virtues and his piety were founded on the steadiest of Christian principles and faith. His faults, I firmly believe, arose from the irritations of a most suffering state of nervous constitution, which hardly ever allowed him a moment's repose."

In the following year, she seems to have suffered much from uneasiness on account of her friend, Mrs. Vesey, who, after her husband's death, gave way to a morbid wretchedness, which nothing could cheer. Brilliant and popular as that lady was, she seems to

have wanted those more solid characteristics which made Miss Carter happy under so many bereavements, and so much ill health.

So uneventful was the life of Miss Carter, that it affords little material for biography; but her letters were full of interest. The mind of a sensible spectator, as it appears in a private correspondence, has the beautiful, mirror-like property of reflecting the state of society with all its fluctuations. We cannot but muse over the sad changes which she incidentally and almost involuntarily portrays. The progress of luxury and the increase of crime keep pace with each other fearfully. Now we read of conflicts between the bold smugglers on the sea-coast, and the armed authorities; we are told of robberies, housebreakings, and murders taking place in parts of the country till now innocent and quiet; then come instances of profligacy in high life, such as were rare in her younger days; — but with it all are blended allusions to so many instances of public and private worth, from her virtuous sovereign downward, that they act like glimpses of sunshine through stormy clouds, reminding one that there is Light above, which may be obscured for a time, but not quenched. There is no moroseness mingled with her serious reflections on the follies or vices of the generations rising about her. Her perfect confidence in Divine Wisdom and Goodness, overruling all, forbade any fear lest evil should gain the mastery at last, and Sin and Ruin sweep over the earth. Even during the

French Revolution, when every arrival from the Continent brought the details of fresh horrors, she thus expresses herself: — "In what will all this violence and wickedness end? Perhaps in some important good. Villains, by doing the dirty work which the virtuous will not do, and which may in a corrupted world be necessary to clear away the obstructions which lie in the road to some great public benefit, become instruments of the reasonable change and reformation which they never intended. Thus, by the overruling providence of God, from the chaos of human passions emerges a system of order and good government."

From September, 1795, till December, 1796, there is a gap in her correspondence with Mrs. Montague; during this interval she had a long and dangerous illness. She recovered sufficiently to take up her winter residence in London, but when she returned to Deal, the eyesight of her beloved friend had failed; and the correspondence at length necessarily closed, so busy was the hand of Time with both the writers. In 1802, Mrs. Elizabeth Montague died. During all the latter years of her life, Miss Carter took a vivid interest in the works of genius which issued from the press, though bearing a stamp very different from that which had passed current in her younger days. She was pleased with the better moral tone assumed by works of fiction; she shared in the surprise and admiration which welcomed the brilliant *début* of Miss Burney; and she yielded to the witcheries of Mrs. Radcliffe. She always took peculiar delight in

the literary successes of her own sex; and when she discovered that a volume of plays which had appeared anonymously, and which she had read with the warmest admiration, were the production of a youthful female, the since celebrated Miss Baillie, her feelings were those of triumph. To this lady the reflection must be pleasant, that Elizabeth Carter lived to bestow on her the blessing of her society and affection. To have won respect from the excellent and discriminating, who have long studied human nature, may justify a becoming pride, and must stimulate to progress.

The contemporary of Pope, Miss Carter lived to witness a new school of poetry indeed; but she gave in her adhesion, by the delight with which she perused The Lay of the Last Minstrel.

But her constitution was at last completely broken up; the new century had indeed dawned upon her, but it had brought much sickness and infirmity. Her decay, however, was very gradual, and soothed by the most affectionate attentions from the many who revered and loved her. It was even cheered by circumstances, which, brought up as she had been in the bosom of loyalty, were gratifying to her feelings as a subject. So far back as the year 1791, she had been admitted to a private interview with Queen Charlotte; and she afterwards received various attentions from one whose domestic character was in harmony with the respect thus paid to a virtuous private individual. Other members of the royal

family visited her only a year or two before her death, but with her usual wisdom she regarded these occurrences in their just light; she was pleased with the amiable spirit indicated by them, not elated by any fancied honor done to herself.

In December, 1805, Miss Carter went to London, for the last time; she took the sacrament previous to setting out, from her nephew, the Rev. Montague Pennington. Her strength began to fail rapidly after the first of January, but her mind remained till a few hours before her decease; and when, at last, the Angel of Death brought her summons, it came in peace. She expired without a struggle, at three in the morning of the 19th of February, 1806, in the eighty-ninth year of her age.

Although her remains were deposited in London, and an epitaph there placed on the stone which covers them, another monument rose to her memory in her native town of Deal. Both pay homage to the union of learning and piety in one female mind. If, as we believe, she combined with these attributes an excellent judgment, modesty, and sweetness of temper, her character was indeed one fit to be held up as a model to her sex. She was an honor to the century in which she lived, and deserves not to be forgotten by that which succeeds it.

THE SILVER BELL.*

An excellent lady lay on her death-bed. Her limbs were benumbed, her voice feeble, and her head heavy, but her warm heart still throbbed with a tender concern for the good of others. There was a young person in whom she was especially interested, because she had been the intimate friend of her own departed daughter; and a parent never forgets to love those whom a dead child has loved. Besides this, the youthful Emily was beloved for her own sake. She was artless and gentle; the lady looked upon her fair face, remembered that it would be difficult for one so young, rich, and beautiful to escape the power of worldliness in some of its many forms, and prayed for her, as none but the dying, perhaps, can pray.

When she felt that her separation from the body was really approaching, this Christian friend sent for Emily, and said a few kind words of farewell, which

* Never before published.

melted her into tears. And then she bestowed upon her a parting gift. It was a morocco case, containing, not jewels for the neck and arms, but a little silver bell of the sweetest tone. There was a spring to be touched, and then it sent forth a low but exquisite sound, dying away in melodious vibrations, that seemed to ask an echo from the heart-strings. At the same time, a silver hand, upon a sort of watch-face beneath the bell, moved forward one division. There were three hundred and sixty-five divisions.

"Emily," said the departing friend, "I give you no farewell advice, and make but one dying request. Each night before you sleep, give at least five minutes to quiet reflection; then touch this spring, and then, when all is again still, *pray* as your heart may move you. Touch the bell at no other time save in this interval between your evening meditation and your evening prayer. One year from to-night, observe if the hand has traversed the whole circle."

"Dear friend," exclaimed Emily, "I have never since my childhood omitted nightly prayer, and do you think I am in danger of it?"

"God knows your dangers better than I; but I perceive that your interest will soon be drawn powerfully towards the outward, and I would have a link between it and the inward. For one of your temperament, it may be good to have some visible token of spiritual progress; and I know that if you are true to the meaning of my request, and comply with

it faithfully, your soul must make some advance in one year."

The friends parted. The faded face of the one was covered from the sight of man; the blooming countenance of the other soon went smiling again along life's daily path. But she forgot not the silver bell, and each night, in the stillness of her solitary chamber, her face covered with her hands, she sat a short season in deep thought, questioning herself of the day that had just passed to return no more, of her own character, her hopes, her dependence on God and her Saviour. Then, with a deep feeling of solemnity, she opened the morocco case, touched the spring, and listened to the sudden voice which sprang forth in response, so sweet that it hardly disturbed the tranquillity of night, into which it soon died away. Then was her soul attuned for prayer, and she felt as if that melodious call had brought a sainted spirit to join in her act of devotion.

Night after night, week after week, passed on. Winter came. Emily went to her first ball. It was very late when she returned, for the moments had flown, she knew not how. She was excited, and yet tired. She took off her sparkling jewels dreamily, for her thoughts were where she had been for hours, and they would not come with her to the dull, lonely chamber. She threw her delicate, snow-white dress upon a chair, slowly inhaled the expiring perfume of her bouquet, wrapped a shawl about her, and yet lingered before she sat down to meditate. It

was very, very hard to call back her soul from the splendidly lighted ball-room. In vain she covered her eyes with her hands. The absent faces and forms of the human creatures, who had been flitting before her eyes, were more real to her than those pure existences whose presence she was wont to feel beside her at this solemn season.

But the girl's conscience was yet pure and strong, and she persevered in the mental struggle till she conquered, till she felt that she could pray with a heart wholly given to the desire of holiness. Then she touched the silver bell, and though strains of a lighter character still rung gayly on her ear, they were hushed instantly, they were overpowered, when that voice of liquid melody came forth. Emily thought it had a cadence of sadness she had never before observed. Was it only contrast with the exhilarating music of the ball-room band?

And now Emily had entered on a new life, the brilliant *débutante* of the season. Her friends congratulated her, because it was the gayest winter, so called, which had been known for some years. The fashionable world seemed wild with the love of pleasure, and excitement in some form was sought and found night after night. And Emily, too, pursued it, and oftentimes thought herself very happy. She loved music, dancing, the theatre, witty conversation, the graceful personations of *tableaux vivans*, with all their charming planning and bustle of preparation; and on she went, admiring and admired, through a succession of gay visions and triumphs.

And each night found her enduring a severe struggle in the solitude of her own apartment, when she came in with her weary step, and strove to shut the door upon the world.

For a time conscience held her back with a strong hand from the morocco case, till she was sure that she could in solemn sincerity call upon her Father in Heaven, and offer him an undivided mind. But, O, it grew so much more difficult! At last, despairingly, she would awaken the silver voice, trusting that the thoughts she could not control would obey that blessed summons. Then the words of prayer would pass through her mind, — not rise up from her heart, — and with a vague, comfortless dissatisfaction she would lay her head upon her pillow, with no consciousness that the blessing of holy ones unseen was falling upon her. And then the enemy would return, as if triumphant over her feeble attempt to baffle his wiles, and lost in idle reveries of vanity and folly, she would sink to sleep.

So it was with her, till even this battle with temptation was more than her failing resolution and enfeebled virtue could sustain. She might not always wear a chaplet without thorns. The gay life has its vexations as well as the busy one. Sometimes she stood before her mirror with dimmed eyes, and a brow of perplexity; but whether dejected or exulting, she felt that the sources of her emotion were not such as she could call upon her Maker to behold with his holy eyes, or visit with his tender sympa-

thy. At moments, the utter frivolity of her life presented itself to her with such fearfulness, that she almost hoped she was overlooked in God's creation. But this was usually on Sabbath nights, and fewer became such awakenings as the year rolled on.

When nine months had elapsed, she had several times omitted to touch the silver bell. Each time she had pleaded to herself that she was too much exhausted! — With what? — Too much exhausted with dissipation to think of God, to remember her Saviour!

At last, she even forgot it.

* * * * *

The year had almost expired, when God in his mercy sent upon Emily a sudden and dreadful illness. The cholera messenger came to her. He did not "take her out of the world," but came to "keep her from the evil that was in it."

She recovered. And the first night in which she again found herself in her sleeping-room alone was the anniversary of that upon which she had received from a dying Christian friend the long-neglected silver bell.

Again she sat down, with her hands clasped over her face, to meditate, and prepare her mind for solemn communion with God. She felt as if she had almost seen him!

There was no struggle with gay images and worldly thoughts now. She looked upon the circle around which the silver hand should have travelled, and felt

the lesson and the reproach with the deepest compunction. It declared that she had been estranged from her Father in Heaven, that the love of Christ had not been in her, that she had forgotten the pious dead, and had given her strength and her affections to the world.

Tears of penitence gushed over her cheeks as the unwonted music again broke upon her ear, and it never sounded so sweet. That night the spared trifler vowed a vow with her prayers. Youthful reader, what, think you, was her vow?

If you had found by bitter experience that you had not sufficient strength of character to resist dangerous influences, would you think it wise or right to expose yourself to them voluntarily?

It is one thing to cry out against the theatre and the ball-room. It is another to ask you soberly to examine yourself as to the effect of the recreations, no matter what they may be, in which you indulge, — the effect on your own soul, your religious habits, the individual spiritual life. If the sound of the silver bell, leading you from calm meditation to true prayer, might not be heard each night in your chamber, what would doom it to silence?

That, whatever it be, is wrong for you.

THE END.

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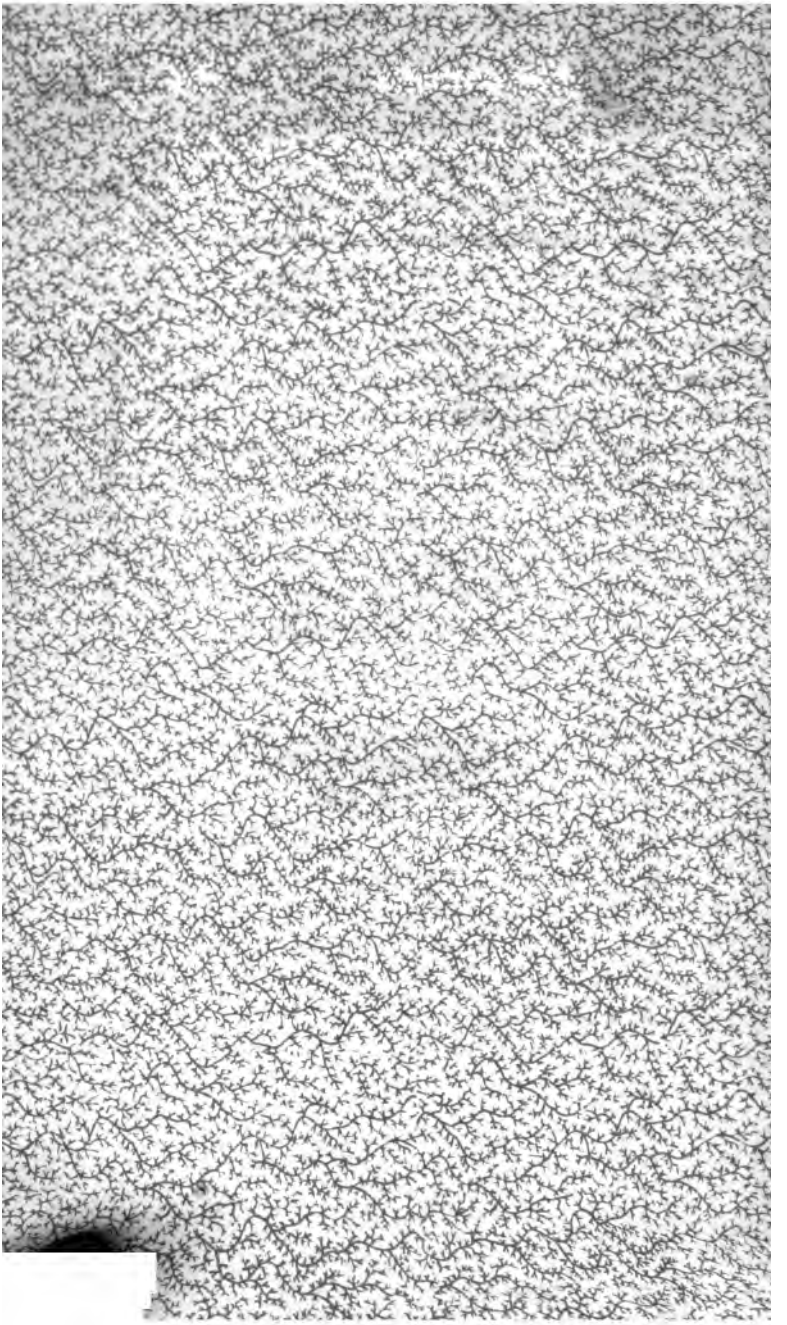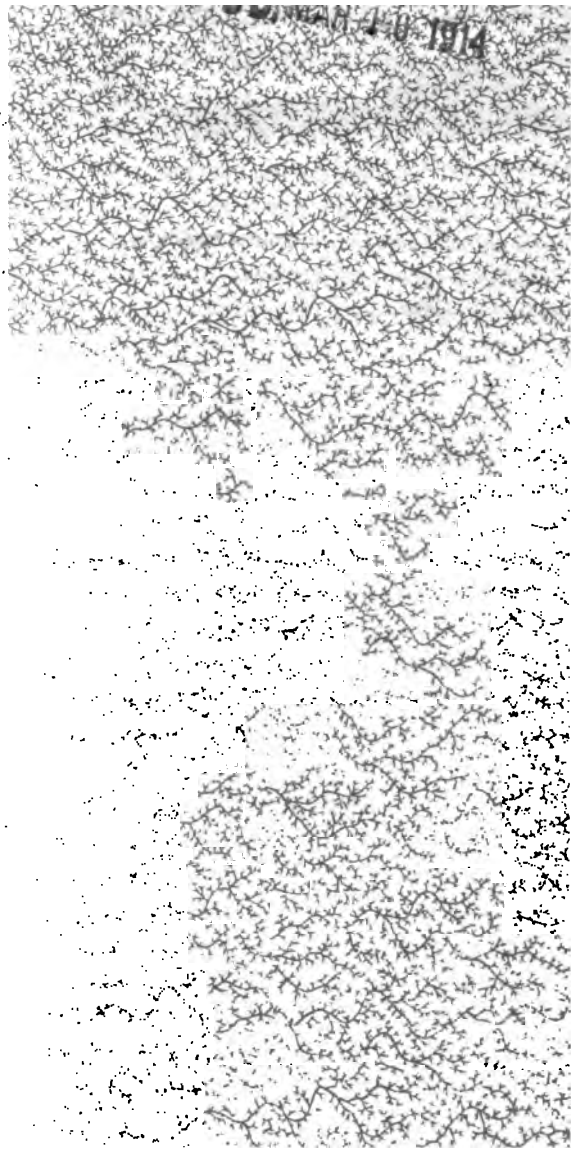
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